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THE GERMAN-FRENCH ARMISTICE OF JUNE, 1940, AND

THE GERMAN ARMISTICE COMMISSION, 1940-1942

By

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B.A. University of Montana, 1966

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

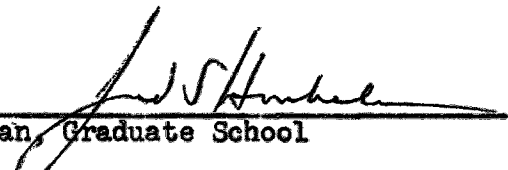
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Chapter I. Introduction

I

Hitler was power mad. He desired power for Germany and determined that this goal could be accomplished best by the acquisition of immense personal power. He "did not distinguish between himself and Germany, he identified himself with her. . . . Austrian by birth, he bore Germany an exclusive and passionate love."¹ Hitler's basic and guiding principle centered about the creation of a unified German Reich. He wanted more than to scrap the Versailles settlement of 1919, for Germany was to have a dominant position in European affairs, and all threats, whether actual or potential, were to be removed.

Hitler reasoned that the land, needed to guarantee Germany's existence, could only be found in the expanses of east central Europe. And so it was that he urged that Germans follow the example of their Teutonic ancestors "to obtain by the German sword sod for the German plow and daily bread for the Nation."²

Before any such grandiose dream could be realized, the hated Versailles Diktat would have to be eliminated. Without specifically referring to the Versailles treaty, Hitler began to discuss the expansion of German boundaries, and France, adjacent as it was, became aware

¹André François-Poncet, The Fateful Years: Memoirs of a French Ambassador in Berlin, 1931-1938 (New York: 1949), 292.

²Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf (Boston: 1943), 140. Hereafter cited as Hitler, Mein Kampf.

of the threat which was contained in the message of "living space" for Germany.

As far as Hitler was concerned, France had submitted itself, in World War I, to prolonged agony and suffering with the objective of realizing the complete dissolution of the German nation. In the 1920's, Hitler exhibited a fear of the possibility of Germany disintegrating into a "hodge-podge of little states."³ Germany's western boundaries were a source of consternation for Hitler, because their length and lack of natural barriers were a liability in a defensive role. Even the Rhine did not provide an adequate defense, since it flowed through the heart of industrial Germany. To contemplate waging a general war in this area was to contemplate the destruction of German industrial power.⁴

France and the role of leadership it attempted to maintain on the continent posed a problem for Hitler. By the same token a unified Germany was always to be considered a threat to France. Both powers wished to eliminate each other; Hitler viewed Paris as a necessary conquest, and the Quay-D'Orsay worked to frustrate a unified and organized Germany.

Hitler believed only two possible courses were open to Germany. The first consisted of holding to the defensive with the possibility that at some future date France would change her policy. The alternate plan was to initiate a radical change in German policy, and it was apparent that the latter plan would prevail. It involved the expansion of Germany's eastern border, and yet Hitler knew that he could not disregard Germany's western flank. Therefore, he was determined that

³Hitler, Mein Kampf, 672.

⁴Ibid., 673.

France was to fall before he could proceed with his eastern schemes.

Hitler was not unaware of the weaknesses of France. The chronic instability of French political life gave him hope as he formulated his foreign policy. It also provided him with much material for speech-making and he deplored the incompetence of a democracy. Because of France's colonial holdings in Africa, Hitler feared that its political weaknesses might cause France to turn for assistance to her colonies resulting in a negroid nation in Europe.⁵ Given Hitler's great preoccupation with the ethnic purity of Germany, such a possibility for France was viewed with skepticism.

Even in cultural matters Hitler portrayed a distaste for France. While he displayed an admiration for French art and architecture of the past, he showed only contempt for contemporary French efforts. Furthermore, he treated all Germans, who spoke of France as a cultural nation, as if they were being disloyal to their own national development and culture.

Even as early as the 1920's, Hitler regarded France as Germany's mortal enemy, and Mein Kampf is filled with such assertions. Many of his early speeches also portray France in this role. However, after Hitler assumed political power, as chancellor he reconsidered many of his earlier statements on the subject of France. It may well be that Hitler now saw the strength and position of France in a new and more balanced perspective, for his first pronouncements on German foreign relations emphasized changes through peaceful measures.

⁵Adolph Hitler, Hitler's Secret Book (New York: 1961), 163. Hereafter cited as Hitler, Secret Book.

Difficulties arise in surveying Hitler's foreign policy because many of his statements have an ambiguous quality in that they lack the element of consistency. Before Hitler came to power, he made many vindictive and questionable statements concerning foreign affairs for the purpose of enhancing his political position. For example, by an insidious attack on the Versailles settlement he hoped to make the position of Stresemann⁶ and the Weimar Republic untenable. In this regard, Hitler stated that, "the day must come when a German government shall summon up the courage to declare to the foreign powers [that] the Treaty of Versailles is founded on a monstrous lie."⁷ He determined to whip up German impatience by attacking the government for neglecting national interests in favor of foreign policy. These tirades aroused considerable French distrust and consequently cast doubt on the ability of the Weimar Republic to speak authoritatively for the German nation.

II

All post-war German governments were preoccupied with the mitigation of the Versailles Diktat. From the statesmen of the Weimar Republic to Hitler, the difficulties and harsh realities imposed by the treaty had to be considered as all important.⁸ In this sense, Hitler

⁶Gustav Stresemann, 1878-1929. German statesman, Chancellor of Germany (1923), Minister of foreign affairs (1923-1929).

⁷Hitler's speech at Munich, August 1, 1923. U.S. War Department, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression (Washington: 1946-1948), V, 79. Hereafter cited N.C.A.

⁸Stresemann, in his memoirs, states that his policy of reconciliation was carried out only to fool the French. He had no other goal than the complete repudiation of the Versailles treaty.

perpetuated a fundamental German policy, the difference being that his endeavors reaped a much richer success than his predecessors.

Hitler was not impressed by the strength of any opposition his policies were likely to meet, and he was not restricted to the conventional methods of diplomacy. He had mastered the intricacies of deceit and the ability to exploit the weaknesses of his opponents. He knew what he wanted and he held the initiative, while France and Britain only knew that they did not want war and, therefore, were always on the defensive.

On October 14, 1933, Hitler announced that Germany would no longer be an inferior nation with respect to her armed forces. This was soon followed by the announcement that Germany was going to begin rearming itself.⁹ On March 15, 1935, he denounced Part V of the Versailles treaty by reinstating universal military service and expanding the German army to thirty-six divisions.¹⁰

The following year Hitler ordered the remilitarization of the Rhineland, and army units were quickly moved into the previously demilitarized zone. Hitler had taken a serious risk in initiating this action, for the German army could have given only weak opposition to any direct French military action. However, his action proved successful, for France did not act and she only joined Britain in registering a strong verbal protest against the German action.

⁹James Gantenbein, Documentary Background of World War II (New York: 1948), 617-19 passim. Hereafter cited as Gantenbein, Documents.

¹⁰Ibid., 645-46.

In March, 1938, Hitler concluded the Anschluss between Germany and Austria. Again he succeeded beyond all expectations. The sovereign state of Austria was incorporated into the German Reich, and the western European powers bestirred themselves only to make verbal protests.

At a conference on November 5, 1937, Hitler again reiterated the essence of his policies with the catch phrases: "the security and the preservation of the nation. . . . This is consequently a problem of space."¹¹ He expressed again his conviction of the inevitability of a war with the western powers. At the same time the German ambassador to France reported that even though France had suffered a series of diplomatic setbacks, she exhibited a willingness to come to an understanding with Germany. France wanted to bring about a stabilization of relations and therefore help to settle its disorderly internal political situation.¹²

Having obtained Austria, Hitler moved logically against Czechoslovakia. The German designs revolved around the Sudeten Germans in western Czechoslovakia. On September 12, 1938, Hitler made a violent speech concerning the treatment of the Sudeten Germans, which caused a major European crisis. On September 28, Chamberlain¹³ appealed for a meeting of all interested parties to resolve the dispute. Mussolini¹⁴

¹¹N.C.A., I, 377.

¹²Germany, Documents and Material Relating to the Eve of the Second World War (New York: 1948), II, 18.

¹³Neville Chamberlain, 1869-1940. British statesman. Succeeded Baldwin as prime minister (May 28, 1937). He failed to receive vote of confidence from Parliament, March, 1940, and resigned.

¹⁴Benito Mussolini, 1883-1945. Italian dictator. Formed ministry 1922. Led Italy into war 1940. Deposed July, 1943.

took up the cause and helped to pressure Hitler into accepting the British proposal. On September 29, the conference convened at Munich, and within a short time Britain, France, Germany, and Italy agreed to a settlement. The terms were satisfactory to Germany.

Soon after the Munich settlement, rump Czechoslovakia was partitioned by Hungary, Poland, and Germany. In March, Germany established the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia with Hacha¹⁵ as president. The western powers expressed shock and concern, although they still entertained some hope of averting a general war. Hitler encouraged such hopes in a speech in which he made explicit the fact that all differences between France and Germany were resolved. Germany had no more demands to make on France, and it wanted "nothing from France--nothing at all."¹⁶

In private, Hitler did not express such peaceful inclinations, for he was convinced of the inevitability of war with the western powers. The Munich conference indicated Germany's new strength, and Hitler showed a willingness to use this strength whenever opportune.¹⁷ Equally important, the Munich conference delivered a fatal blow to the French alliance with the Soviet Union. Russia was an interested party in any consideration of the future existence of Czechoslovakia. Therefore,

¹⁵Emil Hacha, 1872-1945. Czech jurist and statesman. Third president of Czechoslovakia (1938-1939). President of the German "protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia" (1939-1945).

¹⁶Germany, Documents on the Origin of the War (Berlin: 1939), II, 229. Hereafter cited as Germany, Documents on War.

¹⁷Conversation between Mussolini and Ribbentrop, October 28, 1939. Galeazzo Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers (London: 1948), 242-43 passim. Hereafter cited as Ciano, Diplomatic Papers.

when the Soviet Union was not invited to the conference it re-evaluated and then refused to acknowledge its alliance with France.* As a result of this Soviet action, Germany did not have to worry about waging war on two fronts. The Munich conference placed Germany in a position of unusual strength by giving her purpose and unity. With these qualities, Hitler no longer felt that France posed any insuperable military threat to Germany.

On December 6, 1938, France concluded an agreement with Germany. It stated that both Germany and France believed that peaceful relations constituted a necessary element for the preservation of peace. Both parties agreed to remain in contact and resolve any differences by consultation.¹⁸ The declaration contained no specific contract, and it did not obligate either party to any specific arrangement, giving a maximum freedom of action to both sides.

In the early months of 1939, tensions between Poland and Germany began to rise at an alarming rate. In March and April, the western powers made strong assertions that there would be grave consequences if Poland became the object of German aggression. Allied policy had evolved into taking a strong stand even if it meant war. German reaction to the Allied pronouncements indicated that eastern Europe had become a sphere of German interest and it would not brook any interference in the area. Hitler refused to discuss the matter of German-Polish relations with the western powers.¹⁹ When Hitler completed his pact with the Soviet

*The Franco-Soviet Pact of mutual assistance signed in 1935.

¹⁸Germany, Documents on War, 230.

¹⁹Personal letter from Ribbentrop to Bonnet, French minister for foreign affairs, July 13, 1939. Gantenbein, Documents, 695.

Union, he felt confident that the western powers would not start an all-out war if he marched east, and so on August 31, he gave the order for the invasion of Poland.

III

In the first part of September, 1939, France and Britain sent ultimatums to Germany in which they stated their resolve to come to the aid of beleaguered Poland if the German attack did not stop. Germany ignored these notes and Britain and France then declared war on Germany.

Thus began the "phoney war" where all military activity in the west was concerned with avoiding extensive combat. The failure of France and Britain to take active measures to assist Poland gave Germany the necessary time to overrun Poland. The same allied quiescence enabled the German Wehrmacht to consolidate the gains made in the east and then concentrate all forces in the west.

Initial German plans for military operations in the west called for a sweep, in the autumn of 1939, through the Low Countries into northern France. Hitler faced internal opposition to this timetable. Consequently he relented and the planned invasion was postponed until the next spring, for German military leaders felt that France would not be able to withstand a German attack at that time. Furthermore, any advance on the French channel coast would enable Germany to secure strategic bases which could easily carry the war to the British Islands.²⁰

²⁰Germany, Kriegsmarine Oberkommando, Fuehrer Conferences on Matters Dealing with the German Navy, 1939-1945, I, 46. Hereafter cited as Germany, Fuehrer Naval Conferences.

During the winter months, the German plan of attack underwent extensive revision, primarily in the hands of Manstein.²¹ The anticipated rush of Allied forces into the Low Countries became the condition for the German change of strategic plans.²² The often-stated French Maginot Line complex as a cause for the initial French defeat can only be considered as partially valid. Perhaps more important was the offensive side of the Allied "plan D", for "by pushing into Belgium with their left shoulder forward they played into the hands of their enemy, and wedged themselves into a trap."²³ This was a most precarious position because of the speed and mobility of modern warfare. The German success revolved around Allied confusion which isolated their choice forces from the main body.

The battle for France in the first phase was decided by the penetration power of the German panzer divisions in cooperation with tactical air power. Quality was the deciding factor, for Germany deployed only ten armored divisions in the breakthrough in the Ardennes and the subsequent drive to the sea. Nevertheless, this "small pebble thrown from a large sling . . . paralysed an opposing army [Allied] that was in man-size a Goliath."²⁴

²¹Eric von Manstein, influential German staff officer (1941-44).

²²General Gamelin in his memoirs, Servir, states that the allies moved into Belgium because military necessity made it imperative that the Belgium forces (ten divisions) be utilized. Also, the British did not want the area occupied by enemy because of its proximity to the British Islands. The French did not relish the thought of having their northern departments decimated again. If war was to come, let it be waged on foreign soil. Gamelin, Servir, I, 92.

²³B. H. Liddell Hart, The German Generals Talk (New York: 1948), 116. Hereafter cited as Liddell Hart, Generals Talk.

²⁴B. H. Liddell Hart, Revolution in Warfare (New Haven: 1947), 30.

As the Allied forces in northern France staggered back toward the Channel coast, the first phase of the German offensive came to a close. By directive 11, Hitler halted the German panzer divisions in pursuit of the remnants of the Allied northern armies, an action that allowed the majority of the British Expeditionary Force and some French units to be evacuated at Dunkirk.²⁵ His directive also had implications for other areas, for it allowed the Allies the respite to regroup and form new defensive positions.

These new positions, the Weygand Line, became a series of strong-points supported in the rear by other strong-points, a cadrillage or checkerboard.²⁶ Even with such feverish attempts, the Allies had neither the time, space, nor materiel to mold an adequate defense. Along their extended lines, they could muster only 65 divisions, to face the coordinated attack of 124 German divisions.²⁷

When the German offensive resumed, it quickly penetrated the Allied defenses and exploited the shallow depth of the Weygand Line, and the campaign soon degenerated into a series of isolated engagements. On June 10, the French government evacuated Paris and took up temporary residence in Bordeaux. Along the entire front the German army pushed relentlessly forward. Reims fell the 11th, Charlons-sur-Marne on the 12th, Le Havre on the 13th, and on June 14 the Germans occupied Paris.

²⁵The Allied evacuation began May 26 and ended June 4. The total figures of evacuees came to 224,318 British troops and 122,000 Allied troops.

²⁶Edward Spears, Assignment to Catastrophe: The Fall of France, June, 1940 (New York: 1955), II, 63. Hereafter cited as Spears, Fall of France.

²⁷Ibid., 50.

On June 15, Reynaud²⁸ asked the British government to release France from her military obligations to the Allies. Churchill, the British prime minister, ultimately replied that Britain gave its consent to a French inquiry seeking an armistice with Germany.²⁹ One of the major barriers to a French surrender had been surmounted and the last obstacle fell on the same day with the resignation of Paul Reynaud. As soon as Reynaud resigned, President Lebrun instructed Pétain to form a new cabinet. The members of Pétain's cabinet had one common conviction: that France had to seek an armistice.

The attitude of the French leaders had important implications for subsequent events. Reynaud had been the symbol of resistance against the Germans, but after June 16, with his resignation, he had no further influence in the direction of the war. Pétain, who had entered the French government in May, 1940, enjoyed considerable popularity among Frenchmen. He was intensely concerned with the welfare of the French people, and the continuation of useless fighting could only heighten their suffering.³⁰ Furthermore, if an armistice were concluded, at least a portion of France would be spared from German occupation.

²⁸Reynaud, Paul, 1878- . French politician. Premier (1940); interned by the Vichy government (1940); imprisoned by the Germans (1943-45).

²⁹Spears, Fall of France, 282. This British consent was provisional upon the French sending their fleet to British harbors pending negotiations.

³⁰General Spears tells of Pétain showing him a small bronze statue. It portrayed the marshal on horseback bending towards two peasant soldiers. They were looking up with composites of complete trust and respect. It showed the bond between Pétain and the people-- that of a father to his children. Pétain would never leave France. He had to administer to the needs of his children. Spears, Fall of France, 89-90.

The French naval high command considered an armistice the best course to pursue. A keen spirit of competition existed between the French and British navies, and this competition occasionally provided friction and resentment. The French navy, however, had not been defeated by the Germans, and it remained intact and beyond the reach of the German war machine. Darlan,³¹ as minister of the navy, showed a willingness to accept an armistice if the fleet did not capitulate.³²

General Weygand also figured predominantly in the French decision to conclude an armistice. In late May, 1940, Weygand had assumed command of all Allied forces in France. As the French army suffered loss after loss, Weygand began to urge for a settlement with Germany. He had no desire to see the French army completely defeated, no matter how heroic its fall, for without it anarchy would quickly spread throughout France. Moreover, Weygand identified the threat of anarchy with the possibility of a Communist coup d'état in Paris.³³ Weygand reasoned further that to continue the fight from North Africa would prove disastrous for the French army because German armed forces would surely cross through Spain to Spanish Morocco, and then deal the French the coup de grâce.

IV

On June 17, the German government received a French request for

³¹Darlan, Jean Louis, 1881-1942. French naval officer and politician. In Vichy regime: admiral of the fleet, vice-premier and then minister of defense (1941).

³²Henri Pétain, Le Procès du Marechal Pétain (Paris: 1945), I, 82. Hereafter cited as Pétain, Le Procès.

³³Spears, Fall of France, 193-94.

an armistice through the good offices of Spain. The German foreign office immediately instructed its Spanish embassy to inform France that Hitler and Mussolini would examine the French proposal together, and then inform the French government of their common decision.³⁴ The next day, Hitler stated that, while he was conferring with Mussolini, the German army was to continue its advance through France, taking as many objectives as possible. The most important military goals included all "former Reich territory," the western French coastal areas around Cherbourg and Brest, and the Le Creusot armaments center.³⁵

On June 18 and 19, Hitler and Mussolini met at Munich to consider the terms to be imposed on a prostrated France. At the conference, the Axis armistice terms became fixed in principle but not without some differences of opinion, for

Mussolini showed himself to be quite intransigent on the matter of the [French] fleet. Hitler on the other hand, wants to avoid an uprising of the French navy in favor of the British. From all that he says it is clear that he wants to act quickly to end it all.³⁶

Hitler intended to avoid forcing the French government to continue the war against Germany. Furthermore, the French fleet received a great deal of consideration at the Munich meeting. The Italians showed considerable fear of the French navy because it was a competitor in the Mediterranean, and thus wanted to impose harsh naval terms on France. Germany was opposed to any such punitive measure.

³⁴U. S. State Department, Documents on German Foreign Policy, D, (Washington: 1956), IX, 590. Hereafter cited as D.G.F.P., D.

³⁵Order of the Fuehrer. Ibid., D, IX, 606.

³⁶Galeazzo Ciano, The Ciano Diaries, 1939-1943 (New York: 1946), 265-66. Hereafter cited as Ciano, Diaries.

At Munich, the type of negotiations to be conducted with France were agreed on by the Axis. Italy strongly favored tripartite negotiations, that is, the three interested parties at one table. Hitler, on the other hand, did not want to share his triumph with anyone. He reasoned that Germany had many interests in France which did not concern Italy. However, he expressed the hope that a close liaison would be maintained between the two negotiating conventions.³⁷ Furthermore, Hitler felt that the points of common interest between Germany and Italy could be adequately handled through separate negotiations, and the French could be induced to accept similar proposals by both parties.

³⁷Ciano, Diplomatic Papers, 376.

Chapter II. German-French Armistice of June, 1940: Negotiations and Terms

I

At the Munich meeting, the Axis decided upon the time and place for negotiations with France. This meeting also laid out the directions the French delegation would follow to pass through the still advancing German lines. The German army's advance was to continue until armistice terms were agreed to and signed with both Germany and Italy.¹

General Charles Huntziger² headed the French delegation. The foreign office sent Leon Noël, and Vice-admiral Le Luc represented the French admiralty. The other members were general Henri Parisot, former military attaché in Rome, and General Jean Bergeret of the French air force.

Before the delegation left for the conference, Pétain gave Huntziger his final instructions. There was, understandably, some confusion concerning the final course of action which the Germans would take. Regardless of this area of confusion, Pétain gave the orders that if Germany made any claims on the French navy, or if it insisted upon occupying French colonial territory, the negotiations were to be terminated.³

¹D.G.F.P., D, IX, 614.

²Huntziger, Charles, 1880-1941. French army officer. Headed armistice delegation and for short period French delegation to German Armistice Commission. He then became Commander-in-Chief of the French army.

³Weygand, Memoirs, III, 246.

It is of some interest that there was considerable difference of opinion among the German leaders with reference to their policies toward France. This division of opinion had a strong influence on the final terms of the armistice.

The German naval commander, Raeder,⁴ obviously regarded the French navy with deep respect. Germany had not captured the French navy, and if the latter joined the British war effort German war progress would be greatly hampered. Because of French colonial possessions in Africa, the French navy was a vital connection between Africa and France, and thus France had always maintained a strong naval force in the Mediterranean. It was obvious that to control the French navy was to exert great influence in Africa. Therefore, Germany was vitally interested in French naval power for both these reasons since its own navy was inadequate for an effective thrust in both the western Atlantic and Mediterranean theaters.⁵

Raeder expressed deep satisfaction at the German occupation of the French Atlantic coast. It opened up new vistas for the German navy which had been somewhat limited to the confines of the North and Baltic Seas. The German navy's strategic position improved enormously with this direct access to the Atlantic.⁶ To Admiral Doenitz,⁷ this new

⁴Raeder, Eric, 1876-1960. German admiral. Commander-in-Chief, navy (1935-43).

⁵Eric Raeder, My Life (Annapolis: 1960), 366. Hereafter cited as Raeder, My Life.

⁶Ibid., 319.

⁷Doenitz, Karl, 1891- . German naval commander; in submarine service (from 1916); as supreme commander surrendered to Allies (May 7, 1945).

position meant that German submarines could now rely on accessible operational bases on the Atlantic coast. The German navy high command regarded the control of the western French seaboard as indispensable in the war against Britain.

In early June, Frick,⁸ German minister of interior, outlined a harsh policy which was to be adopted toward France. This policy had many adherents among the army and air force leaders. France was to become completely dependent on Germany, and northern France was to become part of the German Reich.⁹ The German ministry of interior next elaborated on Frick's proposal of extending German influence westward. It was taken for granted that French territory would be incorporated into the German Reich, and the areas of principal interest had a historical German background. In these "unofficial" schemes, Alsace and Lorraine were to become German provinces. In addition, other portions of France could be added to Germany, including the land west to the Somme river and then north by Paris to the Channel coast.¹⁰

Many military leaders, especially from the army, insisted that were such terms imposed on France it would be the same as a complete victory, and therefore advocated the completion of the campaign in France. General Warlimont¹¹ and the staff of the German high command

⁸Frick, Wilhelm, 1877-1946. German politician; minister of interior (1933-46); hanged as war criminal.

⁹N.C.A., VI, 868-69.

¹⁰From interrogation of Globke, of the Reich ministry of interior. Trial of Major War Criminals Before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals (Washington: 1949), XXXVII, 220-23 passim. Hereafter cited as N.M.T.

¹¹Warlimont, Walter. German officer. Headed Section L (planning division) of OKW.

(OKW) were initially assigned the duty of forming the armistice, a project for which they were not prepared. The OKW based the armistice terms on the armistice of 1918 which the Allies had imposed on Germany, but many of its proposals were rejected by Hitler when he returned from his meeting with Mussolini at Brenner. The French now were to be offered lenient terms. Hitler justified this policy by proposing that his demands in a final peace treaty with France would be much higher. In the meantime, caution would be exercised as a political expediency.¹² Nevertheless, many of the OKW proposals were utilized and appeared in the final text of the armistice.

The German foreign office's attitude toward the proposed armistice was conciliatory in tone, and some thought had been given in the foreign ministry to securing satisfactory strategic gains through a conciliatory agreement with France. Weizsaecker,¹³ the State Secretary in the foreign ministry prepared a memorandum of proposals to be considered in an armistice with France in this interim period. He did not discuss military matters, but proposed that Germany and France cooperate in maintaining the economic power of France under German guidance. German economic measures were to regulate France's contact with other foreign powers. In the future, the German government was to control the news media in France.¹⁴ The moderation exhibited in this proposal indicated the

¹²Walter Warlimont, Inside Hitler's Headquarters, 1939-1945 (New York: 1962), 102. Hereafter cited as Warlimont, Hitler's Headquarters.

¹³Weizsaecker, Ernst, 1882-1951. German naval officer and diplomat. Undersecretary for foreign affairs (1938-43); ambassador to the Vatican (1943-45).

¹⁴D.G.F.P., D, IX, 592-93 passim.

lenient mood of the foreign ministry, although German control was guaranteed over French foreign affairs and important domestic questions.

Italy presented an unusual problem to the Germans. Although Italian participation in the war, to this point, had been relatively minor, it did not seem at all reticent in making demands. Mussolini had grand dreams of aggrandizement at France's expense, including the Italian occupation of all France east of the Rhône, Corsica, and Tunisia. He also wanted to occupy any French colony he deemed necessary, and especially attractive to him were the French naval bases at Oran and Casablanca. Furthermore, Mussolini demanded complete French demobilization and the surrender of the French fleet. The Germans were forced to disregard the Italian claims because the French would never accept such humiliating terms. At Munich, then, Mussolini was persuaded to discard these schemes and he agreed to follow the German line of reasoning.

It is apparent that Hitler was caught off guard by the ease with which France was beaten. In this light, he prepared an armistice which doubtlessly he planned to replace soon after with a peace treaty. The armistice would be conciliatory in its mood because Hitler wanted no further problem from France as he carried the war to Britain. There was also the hope that Britain might accept peace terms if it could be led to believe that Germany would continue its policy of benign occupation. He hoped that if France was handled with care "Britain would see reason and come to terms."¹⁵

¹⁵Liddell-Hart, Generals Talk, 108.

Moreover, if France rejected the armistice terms, the French fleet would surely sail for British ports. With the addition of the French fleet, Britain could withstand greater naval losses, transport more men and supplies, and create a number of new operational theaters.¹⁶ On June 20, Hitler decided that the French fleet was to be interned at Toulon and Brest, and its warships disarmed. The German navy assumed control of the needed French bases on the Atlantic coast for the further prosecution of the war.¹⁷

II

Compiègne was selected by the Germans as the location for the armistice negotiations. Here the armistice ending World War I had been signed by the defeated Germans, and furthermore, the Germans utilized the same rail coach which the negotiators of 1918 had used. These theatrical props were not lost on either the French or Germans as a setting telling the final obliteration of the past.

On June 20, Keitel¹⁸ began the negotiations by reading the preamble to the German armistice terms. He stated that France, although beaten in battle, fell only "after a heroic resistance." Furthermore, Germany did not want to conduct negotiations which would be "humiliating to the regard of an adversary so brave."¹⁹ After he finished with the

¹⁶Italian staff report, June 18, 1940, Graziani Papers. As quoted in William Langer, Our Vichy Gamble (New York: 1947), 48. Hereafter cited as Langer, Vichy Gamble.

¹⁷Anthony Martienssen, Hitler and His Admirals (London: 1948), 66.

¹⁸Keitel, Wilhelm, 1882-1946. German field marshal. After 1938, Hitler exercised his authority through the OKW which was headed by Keitel. He signed act of military surrender to the Allies (May 9, 1945).

¹⁹Weygand, Memoirs, III, 250.

preamble, most of the German party, including Hitler, left. Keitel, Schmidt²⁰ and an army commission then presented the armistice terms to the French.

Keitel and Huntziger then were involved in an argument over the extent of the French delegation's powers. Keitel felt that it had the authority to sign an armistice, while Huntziger insisted that it could only discuss the armistice terms. The Frenchman refused to yield on this point, and Keitel not too gracefully finally dropped the matter.

The French delegation then retired to examine the armistice terms. When it returned, it stated that the document had to be forwarded to the French government for examination. To this proposed delay Keitel responded: "Absolutely impossible! You must sign at once."²¹ Nevertheless, he was finally forced to submit to the delay.

Before the meeting adjourned for the day however, the French protested against some of the terms. They were disturbed by the large amount of French territory which the Germans were to occupy. General Jodl,²² temporarily replacing Keitel, countered with the remark that most of the indicated occupational zone was already in German hands, and was of utmost importance for the continuation of the war. Huntziger then expressed an alarm that Italy was probably going to make excessive demands on France. Jodl replied that Germany understood the French position. He stated, though, that the German negotiators had no authority to modify the terms of the armistice, but he hinted that modifications

²⁰Schmidt, Paul. Interpreter of German foreign ministry.

²¹Paul Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter (New York: 1951), 181. Hereafter cited as Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter.

²²Jodl, Alfred, 1892-1946. German army officer. Chief of staff, OKW.

could be worked out at a later date. In reply to a French inquiry of the nature and authority of the Armistice Commission, Jodl stated that it was to be the sole agency to implement the "rights of an occupying power." Naturally, the commission would be curtailed by the provisions of the armistice.

The two delegations clarified and discussed some minor points, and then the meeting adjourned until the next day. During the break, the French delegation informed its government of what had transpired.²³

The next day Huntziger began the session by reporting that the French government wanted a number of clarifications. When he announced that the French would prefer to destroy their aircraft rather than release any of them to the Germans, Keitel registered considerable surprise. He quickly recovered to announce that any such decision was to be the prerogative of the Armistice Commission.

Next Huntziger asked for a modification of Article 8 so it would read: "After demobilization and landing of ammunition under German and Italian supervision, the French warships will be taken to French African ports with half of their peacetime complement." Keitel responded that the original article was a generous German concession and any consideration for modification was the responsibility of the Armistice Commission, and thus the French request was denied.

The French delegation then turned to discussing Article 17. It stipulated that the French government would not attempt to remove any economic assets from the occupied territory. The French wanted to

²³Memorandum of first day of negotiations prepared by Schmidt. D.G.F.P., D, IX, 643-52 passim.

modify it by inserting the clause enabling France to transfer from the occupied zone those products vital for the population in the free zone. Keitel finally agreed, at least in principle, to the request.²⁴

Huntziger then protested against that part of Article 19 which stated that all Germans residing in France at the end of hostilities were to be returned to Germany. The French objected to it because it disregarded the right of asylum. Keitel would not consider any modification of the article, for as far as he was concerned, those Germans who had deserted their country were to pay for their traitorous actions.

The French delegation next asked that Germany allow the French government to return to Paris and that it be connected to the free zone by some sort of corridor. Keitel responded that such could occur in the future, but it depended on future political events. The dilatory behavior of Germany indicated that it preferred to postpone discussion on the subject until negotiations for a peace treaty could be arranged.

Finally, the French returned to their concern for the demands Italy might make on France. Huntziger reiterated that although Italy had declared war on France it had not really waged war. Therefore France had no reason to conclude an agreement with Italy as it was doing with Germany. He made it clear that France "would not submit to certain conditions made by Italy. . . . Come what might, honor was of greater importance than life." The Germans declined any comment on the French predicament.²⁵

²⁴M. Noël testimony, August 2, 1945. Petain, Le Procès, I, 470.

²⁵Memorandum of second day of negotiations, June 22. D.G.F.P., D, IX, 664-71 passim.

The rest of the afternoon the delegations met a number of times, and the Germans gave limited concessions in Articles 5 and 17. Article 5 now allowed France to retain its military aircraft if they were disarmed and placed under German supervision. In Article 17, Germany now agreed to consider the needs of the French population in the free zone.²⁶

Huntziger consulted several times with the French government with reference to the pending armistice. Toward evening, Keitel became irritated at the delay, and he sent an ultimatum to the French that "if we cannot reach an agreement within the hour the negotiations will be broken off and the delegation will be conducted back to the French lines."²⁷ Huntziger then received the order to place his signature to the armistice. As the signing ceremony took place, Huntziger was moved to comment, "as a soldier you [Keitel] will well understand the onerous moment that has come to me." Keitel replied, "I acknowledge your declaration. . . . I can only reply that it is honorable for the victor to honor the vanquished."²⁸

Since the German-French armistice was to come into effect when France concluded a similar agreement with Italy, the French delegation left for Rome, where it soon after signed an armistice with Italy. The military terms dealing with the French armed forces were identical to those of the German-French armistice. The terms concerned with the occupied portions of France were quite limited in scope. It also set up

²⁶Ibid., D, IX, 669.

²⁷Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter, 183.

²⁸"Armistice," Time, July 1, 1940.

an Italian Armistice Commission to regulate the armistice terms. Six hours after the Franco-Italian armistice was signed all hostilities ceased.

III

At first, the armistice governed all relations between Germany and France. Its shadow loomed over all negotiations between the two states, and all initial discussions dealt with the armistice and the modification of its terms. It permeated Germany's foreign policy toward France and influenced every facet of French life.

Article 1 dealt with the cessation of hostilities. It stipulated that the French government was to order its armed forces to stop all military action, and all French army units trapped or encircled were to capitulate.

Article 2 outlined the extent of French territory to be occupied by Germany, almost three-fifths of metropolitan France.²⁹

Article 3 stipulated that, in occupied France, Germany had "all the rights of the occupying power." The vagueness of this term provided the bases for long and protracted arguments, not only between Berlin and Vichy but also between a number of competitive German agencies. The article also demanded that the proper French authorities cooperate with the German military commanders in the occupied zone, insuring the success of the German occupation. It finally gave the French the right to return their government to Paris. Germany promised that if such occurred

²⁹Metropolitan France is that portion of France located in continental Europe to separate it from other areas considered part of the French state, as Algiers.

it would provide the French government with the necessary facilities for administering all of France. The French expressed an intense interest in this section of Article 3.

Article 4 provided for the demobilization and disarming of all French armed forces. This action was to take place within a time span to be set by the German Armistice Commission. In principle, it granted the Vichy regime a military force large enough to maintain internal security in the free zone, but the size of this force was to be decided by the Armistice Commission. The article stated that all French army units were to be stationed in unoccupied France. All French military units still in the occupied zone were to retire to southern France, but before these units began their southern trek, they were to surrender all their weapons to the Germans.

Article 5 contained a French guarantee that it would, on demand, surrender all war materiel desired by Germany. This materiel not only included heavy equipment and large caliber weapons but also small arms and ammunition. French military aircraft were exempted from this article, provided they were disarmed and placed under German supervision.

Under Article 6, all French war materiel was to be stock-piled. The French were to surrender this materiel to centralized locations where it was to be interned for the duration of the armistice. The article further stipulated that the stockpiles were to be supervised by Axis control commissions. Finally, all French industries of war were to cease production.

Article 8 was concerned with the French fleet. All French naval units, except for those needed to protect French colonial interests, were

to be assembled in their peace-time home ports. Then they were to be demobilized and disarmed under Axis supervision. France was assured that its fleet would remain intact and under French sovereignty and that Germany had no ulterior designs on any part of the French navy.

By Article 11, all French merchant ships were to be interned in French ports. France was to recall all its shipping to either home or neutral ports, and Germany assumed the right to regulate all future French merchant shipping.

Germany was to control all French air flights by Article 12. Furthermore, all French airfields and ground installations were placed under the supervision of German control commissions, and they could demand that any French installation be closed.

Article 13 contained a French guarantee that French military equipment in the occupied zone would be turned over to the German army. Furthermore, all port facilities, shipyards, and industries in the occupied zone were to be safeguarded from sabotage by the French government. This same provision applied to French railways, highways, communication facilities, and navigation aids.

By Article 17, France was to see that all economic assets in the occupied zone remained intact, and no attempt was to be made by France to transfer them to the free zone. The next article provided that France was to pay for the costs of the German occupation. The specific amount was to be decided by the Armistice Commission at a later date.

Article 19 gave Germany the right to claim all German nationals residing in France and its colonies. French police were to provide German authorities with all the assistance needed to fulfill this article.

Article 20 stipulated that all French prisoners of war were to remain prisoners until Germany and France concluded a peace treaty.

A German Armistice Commission was created by Article 23. It was to regulate and supervise the execution of the armistice, and it was to be under the exclusive authority of the OKW. It was also to maintain the proper conformity between this armistice and the Franco-Italian armistice. The article also provided that the French government was to send a delegation to the German Armistice Commission from whom it was "to receive the executive orders of that commission."³⁰

IV

The armistice provided for the temporary suspension of armed hostilities between Germany and France. It did not represent, in any way, a restoration of normal relations between the two states, for the armistice did not indicate the legal termination of hostilities. Therefore, Germany and France remained, technically, in a state of war. The German-French armistice of 1940 resembled in many ways the "capitulation armistice" signed between Germany and the allied powers in 1918.³¹ It was a capitulation armistice in the sense that, by submitting to its terms, France could not hope to resume hostilities for the French army had a maximum contingency of only 100,000 men, and the French navy and air force were disarmed and demobilized.

The wording of the armistice was placed in a general context from which specific arrangements could later be applied. A principal reason

³⁰D.G.F.P., D, IX, 671-76.

³¹Gerhard von Glahn, Law Among Nations (New York: 1965), 575.

for the general character of the armistice was due to the optimistic outlook of many German leaders that the war would be quickly ended. This prevailing hope made it seem that an armistice with specific terms was completely unnecessary, for the negotiations of a final peace treaty with France would soon begin.

As already mentioned, the German Armistice Commission was to regulate the terms of the armistice, but its jurisdiction was soon curtailed in the occupied zone. The occupied zone included northern France and the Pas-de-Calais and it extended from the eastern frontier of France along the channel coast, then southward to the Loire river, and following this water course eastward to the Swiss border. Germany also established a prohibitive zone in France which extended along the French Atlantic coast to the Spanish frontier, and within this area Germany placed very stringent controls over the French population.³²

As mentioned before, Article 3 gave the Germans "the exercise of the rights of the occupying power in the occupied part of the French population." This was confirmed to a German general with the title of chief of military administration. At the signing of the armistice this function was exercised by General Johannes Blaskowitz. The Nord and Pas-de-Calais were placed under the jurisdiction of the military commander of Brussels, General Alexander Falkenhausen, while Alsace and Lorraine were placed under a German civil administration.³³

³²Italy assumed the right of occupying power over the Mentone district in southeastern France. They established civil commissioners to administer the rights of occupation. Even so, the French administration of the area continued to function with little interference from the Italians.

³³Order of OKH, June 19, 1940. France, Commission Consultative des Dommages et des Réparations, Dommages subis par la France et l'Union

On June 26, the German army high command (OKH) ordered General Alfred Streccius to act as chief of the civil administration in France.

The order went on to state that

the mission of the military administration is to establish calm and order in the French occupied territory and of utilizing the resources of the country for the needs of the Wehrmacht and the economy of the German war.³⁴

française du fait de la guerre et de l'occupation ennemie, 1939-1945, I, 114. Hereafter cited France, Domages subis par la France.

³⁴Ibid.

Chapter III. July-December 1940

Initially the Armistice Commission was regarded as the only avenue through which modifications in the armistice could be carried out. These modifications were made in the planning section of the OKW, and then passed on to the French government through the commission. As already mentioned, the commission was responsible solely to the OKW. Its first chairman was General Stuelpnagel.¹ The commission resided at Wiesbaden, and it was divided into eight subcommittees.² These subcommittees supplied the chairman with information on all aspects of the armistice, and they also worked out the details of programs and decisions on the armistice.

The French contingent sent to Wiesbaden consisted of a chairman, General Huntziger,³ and a staff of thirty-seven military personnel and twenty-seven civilians.⁴ The French delegation received instructions from the Armistice Commission in two ways: through meetings of the German and French chairmen and through the German subcommittees.

¹Stuelpnagel, Otto, 1880-1948. German army officer; chairman, German Armistice Commission (1940); commander of occupied France (1940-44 ff.).

²These subcommittees were divided into the following sections: army, navy, air force, transmissions, war prisoners, war industries, foreign affairs, and the press.

³Huntziger, Charles, 1880-1941. French army officer; headed delegation that signed the armistice (July 22, 1940); Commander-in-Chief, army (1941).

⁴France, Delegation française auprès de la commission allemande d'armistice (Paris: 1947-1959), I, v. Hereafter cited D.F.C.A.A.

I

On June 29, Germany and Italy concluded an agreement on the enforcement of their respective armistices with France. In this agreement, the German Armistice Commission assumed control of all French ports on the Atlantic. The Italian Armistice Commission, residing at Turin, undertook the responsibility for providing adequate controls at all French ports on the Mediterranean. The next day, the German Armistice Commission informed the French delegation of this division of spheres of interest with regard to the French navy. France, in the future, had to receive the approval of the Italian Armistice Commission for any projects it wished to initiate in the Mediterranean, Red Sea, and the Gulf of Aden.⁵

At this meeting, the Armistice Commission made a number of minor modifications in Article 8 of the armistice. The commission allowed all French warships to be demobilized, with half crews, at Toulon and North African ports.⁶ It also made arrangements with the French which strengthened the lines of communication between the French government and its naval bases in the colonies. Germany maintained control over the French navy by inserting the provision that all such communication had to be approved by the Armistice Commission.⁷

This activity of the Armistice Commission was disrupted at the

⁵U. S. State Department, Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, D, IX (Washington: 1960), 673. Hereafter cited as D.G.F.P., D.

⁶Paul Auphan, The French Navy in World War II (Annapolis: 1959), 120. Hereafter cited as Auphan, French Navy.

⁷D.F.C.A.A., I, 26-27.

beginning of July by a series of external events. The first centered around those French ships still in British ports. On July 1, the Armistice Commission demanded that France comply with Article 1 by ordering all French ships to return to their home ports, but the French government made no reply to this demand. Therefore, on July 3, the commission drew up an ultimatum that the future existence of the armistice was in jeopardy unless the French government ordered all of its ships to return to France.⁸ At the same time, the British government began interning French ships found in British waters.⁹

The main British action, however, occurred at the French port of Mers-el-Kabir, Algeria, and the British naval base at Alexandria, Egypt. On July 3, a British squadron delivered an ultimatum to the French naval forces at Mers-el-Kabir. The French were given the alternative of either surrendering, accepting internment in the United States, or of fighting. The French chose to fight, and the British squadron attacked the French ships in the harbor. From this "new Copenhagen,"¹⁰ only one French capital ship was able to escape unscathed. The same day, a French naval squadron at Alexandria received an identical British mandate, but the French and British commanders agreed to a local gentleman's agreement. As a result, the French naval squadron was interned at Alexandria for the duration of the war.

⁸Auphan, French Navy, 121.

⁹The British operation 'Catapult' quickly rounded-up the following French naval ships: 2 old battleships, 2 destroyers, 8 destroyer escorts, 7 submarines, and a wide assortment of auxiliary craft. Ibid., 116.

¹⁰Referring to the British attack on the neutral Danish fleet in 1802. A successful action to eliminate the threat of Napoleon I utilizing the Danish fleet.

The French government reacted immediately to these British attacks on its warships. The same day as the attack on Mers-el-Kabir, Huntziger informed the Armistice Commission that the French government viewed the British action as a grave incident and, consequently, it desired extensive modifications in the naval terms of the armistice. France asked for adequate concessions to provide for the security of its overseas possessions. At the time, Stuelpnagel was only able to express his condolences, and he was not able to make any decisions on the French request until he received further instructions from his government.¹¹

The following day, the commission informed the French that Hitler understood the French position and approved the military measures already taken in response to the British attacks.¹² Furthermore, the commission was suspending the application of Article 8 until the "situation was clarified."¹³ This modification did not mean that Germany relinquished all control over the French navy, for the Armistice Commission quickly drew up a "zone of action" which confined all French naval units to an area extending along the coast of Morocco and North Africa.¹⁴

Through the following week, the French delegation continued to ask for more German cooperation on naval questions. On July 9, Hitler

¹¹D.F.C.A.A., I, 39-40 passim.

¹²Admiral Darlan, minister of French navy, issued orders that all British ships at sea were to be attacked. The next day, he modified this order to apply only to those British ships found within twenty miles of France.

¹³D.G.F.P., D, X, 124.

¹⁴D.F.C.A.A., I, 43-44.

replied that the concessions already granted were to remain in force, but he was not going to make any binding commitment on the French navy for he "wanted further time to think it over."¹⁵ On July 11, Admiral Raeder advised the Fuehrer that French participation in the war against Britain by defending its colonies and bases would be welcome, but the French should not be allowed to operate in the Atlantic. These proposals received Hitler's complete agreement.¹⁶

Up to the middle of September, the French government made repeated requests to the commission for additional releases of French naval forces. It indicated that if the Germans continued to follow a moderate policy toward the French navy, it was willing to undertake talks outside the realm of the Armistice Commission.¹⁷ At this time, though, the German government maintained the position that it preferred to work within the structure of concessions already granted.¹⁸ This rather harsh position was modified by an attack on the French empire.

On September 23, the Free French, in conjunction with the British navy, attacked the French naval base at Dakar, West Africa. The attack was a complete failure, but it had important consequences, for it furthered the cause of those in the Vichy government who advocated closer collaboration with the Axis. This French desire for more cooperation was accented by the defection of the French colonies of Chad, Cameroon, and Equatorial Africa to the Free French. The French delegation imme-

¹⁵N.C.A., VII, 291-92 passim.

¹⁶Fuehrer Naval Conferences, I, 69.

¹⁷D.F.C.A.A., I, 224.

¹⁸N.C.A., VII, 292.

diately requested that the Armistice Commission lift the sailing ban on the French fleet at Toulon, so that the battleship Strasbourg, three cruisers, and an unspecified number of destroyers could bolster the French defenses in West Africa. The commission refused to allow any French naval ships to leave for the colonies, and the sailing ban remained in effect at Toulon.¹⁹

The German military command regarded French reaction to the attack on Dakar as an opportunity to enlist the active aid of the French navy against Britain. Naval operations in the Mediterranean offered a number of unique problems to the German naval leaders. The German surface fleet could offer its Italian counterpart very little assistance because of the distances involved and the British control of the access to the Mediterranean. The German submarine fleet also could offer little aid to Italy because of the British control of the Gibraltar Straits and the currents flowing through the straits into the Mediterranean. Once in the Mediterranean, German submarines never became available for operations in any other theater.²⁰ However, Hitler approached any such naval policy change with caution, for it implied political agreements beyond the armistice.

The Fuehrer, by excluding the French naval forces at Toulon from taking part in the defense of Dakar, expressed his distrust of French intentions. Nevertheless, he gradually began to change his mind toward the feasibility of enlisting active French aid to the German war effort.

¹⁹D.G.F.P., D. XI, 165.

²⁰Admiral Doenitz, Memoirs: Ten Years and Twenty Days (London: 1959), 161.

Admiral Raeder was a staunch advocate of collaboration with France, he hoped to see the French navy join with the German, and he believed such action would prove beneficial in the war against Britain. Consequently, he advocated that liberal concessions be given to the French navy. Hitler, on the other hand, was quite hesitant to accept these proposals, for he insisted that any settlement with France must include a political agreement.²¹

On October 4, Hitler met with Mussolini,²² and Hitler's main theme was that he wanted to mobilize French forces against Britain in the Mediterranean. He admitted that Britain was far from beaten and that Germany was going to need all the resources it could muster to insure a victory over the British.²³

As already mentioned, Hitler felt that any policy change toward the French involved political agreements beyond the armistice. German strategic and political thinking had undergone considerable change, for the German goal now was to go beyond the armistice to establish a modus operandi for expanded collaboration with France. The Armistice Commission did not take part in these activities, and its sole function was to produce an atmosphere that was conducive to the success of the political negotiations.

On October 24, Hitler met Pétain at Montoire. The conversation was conducted in general terms, Hitler made no specific offer, and the

²¹Warlimont, Inside Hitler's Headquarters, 122.

²²They met at Brenner, a village and customs station at the Italian end of Brenner Pass; scene of a number of conferences between Hitler and Mussolini (1940-1941).

²³Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter, 192.

French were unwilling to make any serious commitment. The conference produced a procès verbal which, like the meeting, was put in very general terms. Throughout the conversations Hitler hoped to form a grand coalition against Britain. However, Hitler, as soon as the meeting was over, seemed profoundly disappointed at the results of his efforts. This disappointment would continue to grow as time went on.²⁴

As late as November 12, Hitler considered the possibility of enlisting the active aid of France. This would mean that for the time being Germany was to regard France as a "nonbelligerent power" which would have to tolerate German military measures affecting it and provide for its own means of defense. This meant the French had to defend their own African empire, and from "this task the participation of France in the war against England would develop in full force."²⁵ The same day, the Armistice Commission was instructed to grant minor concessions to the French. These grants provided very limited reinforcements to the French colonial armed forces. Other than this minor action, it was to take a noncommittal stand.²⁶

A series of political discussions were conducted between November 12 and December 13 with the intention of acquiring some sort of positive result from the Montoire meeting. These conversations were attempts by Hitler to initiate a reconciliation with the French for military reasons. North Africa and the Mediterranean began to have a strong appeal as an alternative to the German inability to invade Britain. With the change

²⁴Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter, 199.

²⁵Hitler's directive no. 18, N.C.A., III, 403-04.

²⁶D.G.F.P., D, XI, 526.

in emphasis, Hitler hoped to acquire French assistance, and because of such a consideration he refrained from taking a hard stand toward France. On the other hand, he did not decide in favor of a lenient policy, for when Laval²⁷ was discussing with Ribbentrop the possibilities of a broad collaboration, Hitler issued directive 19. This directive, operation "Attila," laid down the procedure for the occupation of all France and the capturing of the French fleet at Toulon. The operation was to come into effect if in the future any part of the French empire revolted against the Vichy regime.²⁸

On December 20, the Armistice Commission received instructions to conduct its future activities in accordance with the provisions set up in operation "Attila". Moreover, the sailing ban on the French navy at Toulon was to remain in effect.²⁹

II

The German-French armistice dealt with the French air force in much the same manner as with the French navy. By Article 5, all French military aircraft in the free zone were to be disarmed and placed under German supervision. Article 6 stipulated that all other materiel of the French air force was to be placed in stock-piles under German supervision.³⁰

²⁷Laval, Pierre, 1883-1945. French lawyer and politician; premier and minister of foreign affairs (1931-32); vice-premier in Vichy government (July-December, 1940); premier (from April, 1942).

²⁸Hitler's directive no. 19. Margaret Carlyle, Documents on International Affairs (London, 1954), II, 128-29.

²⁹Extract from war diary of Wehrmacht operations staff. D.G.F.P. D, XI, 918.

³⁰D.G.F.P., D, X, 672-73.

On July 5, the Armistice Commission released the French government from the provisions of Article 5. At the same time, the commission granted the French the right to use anti-aircraft guns in the unoccupied zone and suspended the prohibition against French planes from taking off in the free zone.³¹ These German concessions were intended only to facilitate the French defenses against British attacks, for in granting these concessions Germany placed definite limits on the freedom of action France could take with its air force.

The German limitations were particularly concerned with the size and activity of the French air force in unoccupied France. On July 8, the Armistice Commission extracted from the French delegation the acceptance of central locations for the disarmament of the French air force. These were located at Clermont-Ferrand, Châteauroux, and Lyon.³² The following week, the Armistice Commission began sending control commissions into the free zone to supervise the disarmament of the French air force. Germany followed a policy of allowing the French to retain some minor air units in the free zone "for operational use against England. . . . While disarmament of the remainder of the Air Force in France was in progress."³³

The Armistice Commission allowed the French to maintain some air force units in the French colonies. At the beginning of July, the French colonial air force consisted primarily of what the French had removed from metropolitan France before the armistice came into effect. The

³¹Ibid., D, XI, 127.

³²D.F.C.A.A., I, 44.

³³D.G.F.P., D, X, 127.

British attacks on the French navy, on July 3, resulted in a German release of limited air force reinforcements for duty in North Africa. The commission made it explicit to the French that North Africa was the responsibility of Italy and that Italian approval was a prerequisite for all French air operations in that area.³⁴

West Africa, on the other hand, was within the area which the Germans regarded as their sphere of interest in regulating the size and activity of all French armed forces. On September 26, in response to the Allied attack on Dakar, the commission released additional French air force units for defense of West Africa and at the same time to bolster the Vichy control of Equatorial Africa.

Through the fall of 1940, the Armistice Commission took little interest in the French air force. The French, nevertheless, made a number of requests for further releases of aircraft to be used in the French empire. The commission complied in a limited fashion by allowing the French to retain a few more transport planes.³⁵

Throughout the period, Germany showed a willingness to grant the Vichy regime limited concessions in these armistice terms affecting the French air force, but only when it was to be used in defense of the French empire. The Armistice Commission made it quite clear that although it had conceded to the French a number of releases for their air force, the "disarmament of the . . . Air Force will be maintained."³⁶ The German attitude toward the execution of the armistice terms relative

³⁴Ibid., D, X, 127.

³⁵Ibid., D, XI, 526.

³⁶Stuelpnagel to French delegation, Ibid., D, XI, 62.

to the French air force depended upon the French ability and action it took to quell the revolts in the French empire.

III

The German Armistice Commission exhibited a constant uneasiness toward the French army. In Article 4 of the armistice, all French armed forces in the occupied zone were to withdraw immediately to the free zone,³⁷ and throughout the period, the commission made it clear that the occupied zone was strictly off-limits to all French military personnel.³⁸

Soon after the Armistice Commission convened, the French brought forward a series of questions concerning the demarcation line dividing France. On July 17, the commission indicated that the line was not intended to divide the civil administration of France. Rather, it was meant to establish a military line to eliminate all French military personnel from passing into the occupied zone.³⁹ From this point on, the commission seldom discussed the demarcation line. It generally referred problems concerning the line either to the German military commander in France, the Economic Commission, or to Abetz, the German ambassador in Paris.

Article 4 further provided for the disarming and demobilizing of the French army, with the exception of those units needed for the internal security of France. The German and Italian Armistice Commissions were given the responsibility of deciding on the size and organization

³⁷Ibid., D, X, 672.

³⁸D.F.C.A.A., I, 58.

³⁹Ibid., I, 58.

of the French army.⁴⁰

By June 30, the German Armistice Commission had decided that the maximum size for all French armed forces was not to exceed 100,000 men. During the next two weeks, the French delegation made repeated requests for concessions in the size and organization of the French metropolitan army, and in response the Armistice Commission allowed France to maintain a 100,000 man army in the unoccupied zone. France asked that the free zone be divided into nine military regions, each containing one army division. The commission refused to accept the French proposal, and demanded that the French government accept its plan for the future structure of the French military districts, that of eight military regions each containing one army division.⁴¹

Through July and August, the Armistice Commission continued sending instructions to the French government concerning the future location and organization of each division. On August 14, the commission refused to retract its decisions on the number of troops the French army could retain. At this time, the French delegation requested the release of some munitions and equipment from the stock-piles under German control, but the commission refused to consider the French request on the basis that the French army had more than enough equipment at its disposal.

On September 26, soon after the allied attack on Dakar, the commission demanded that the French fix a date for completion of the organization and construction of the French army. The commission

⁴⁰D.G.F.P., D, X, 672.

⁴¹D.F.C.A.A., I, 58.

proposed that by November 1 all organization be completed, although it was willing to accept November 15 as the final date. Furthermore, the commission demanded that by November 1 all war materiel the French army still retained was to be stock-piled at specified centers. This being accomplished, the French were to segregate the materiel destined for use by the French army, and the sorting of materiel was to be done under the watchful eye of German control commissions. At this time, the commission demanded that the French government provide the control commissions already in the unoccupied zone with detailed information on the structure of command in the French metropolitan army.⁴²

The French had accepted the German demand, by October 20, for dividing the French army. During the following week, the French delegation, taking advantage of the political activity at Montoire, made a series of requests for concessions in the size and organization of the French army. Its efforts were wasted, for Stuepnagel firmly refused to discuss any proposals until the results of Montoire were transmitted to Wiesbaden.⁴³ This, for all practical purposes, was the last discussion in 1940 over the organization of the French metropolitan army. The commission's interest in the French army did not extend to former personnel who were now prisoners of war.

Article 20 of the armistice stipulated that all members of the French armed forces who were prisoners of war in German control were to remain as such until the conclusion of a peace treaty.⁴⁴ This was one

⁴²D.F.C.A.A., I, 377.

⁴³Ibid., II, 115-17 passim.

⁴⁴D.G.F.P., D, X, 675. .

of the few articles of the armistice which appeared to be precise in wording and content, but it soon underwent considerable modification.

At the conclusion of the armistice, approximately 3,000,000 Frenchmen were interned by the Germans as prisoners of war. The French government expressed a deep concern for the German policy of holding French military personnel. It deprived France of a large segment of its labor force, especially at a time when the harvest season was soon to begin.⁴⁵ The French made requests to the commission for the release of at least some of the French prisoners of war. On July 4, the commission divorced itself from much of the responsibility concerning the prisoners of war. It did so because the French agency concerned with prisoners of war directed most of their questions and negotiations to the civil administration department attached to the German military command in occupied France. The Armistice Commission, however, reserved the right to consider any question on French prisoners of war in the future if ordered to do so by the OKW.⁴⁶

In late August, the French government began direct negotiations with Germany for the release of prisoners of war. As a result of the activities of this French mission to Germany over one million Frenchmen were allowed to return to France.⁴⁷ From the appointment of the French

⁴⁵Statement by R. Moreau, commissioner-general for repatriated prisoners. France During the German Occupation, 1940-1944: A Collection of 292 Statements on the Government of Marechal Pétain and Pierre Laval (Stanford: 1957), I, 213. Hereafter cited as France During the Occupation.

⁴⁶D.F.C.A.A., I, 36-37 passim.

⁴⁷The German policy was to assign to France the duty of protecting its own prisoners. In other words, France became the "protecting power" for the released French prisoners of war.

negotiating mission to Berlin and the establishment of the French civil delegation attached to the German authorities in occupied France, the Armistice Commission had little to do with French prisoners.

In Article 6 of the armistice, all French stocks of military equipment and munitions in the unoccupied zone were directed to stock-piles under Axis supervision.⁴⁸ Through July and August, the French army, on its own initiative, attempted to conceal as much military equipment as possible in the free zone.⁴⁹ The commission had some knowledge of these French activities, and it continually demanded detailed information on the amount and location of all French military equipment. The French attempts to conceal materiel from the Germans was never successful, for the German control commissions, under the direction of the Armistice Commission, soon ferreted out most of the camouflaged materiel.⁵⁰

Article 4 of the armistice provided for the demobilization and disarming of the French army in unoccupied France. The Armistice Commission was to achieve this task by sending control commissions into unoccupied France. By Article 6, these control commissions were also to regulate and supervise the stock-piling of French military equipment.⁵¹ On June 29, the German and Italian Armistice Commissions agreed to the creation of separate spheres of interest in unoccupied France. In this

⁴⁸D.G.F.P., D, X, 673.

⁴⁹Statement by General Revere. France During the Occupation, II, 752. Cf. Weygand, Mémoires: Rappelé au service, III, 322.

⁵⁰Testimony of General Picuendar. Pétain, Le Procès du Marechal Pétain, II, 636-37 passim. Hereafter cited as Pétain, Le Procès.

⁵¹D.G.F.P., D, X, 673.

agreement, the German control commissions confined their activity to a zone extending from the Rhône west to the Atlantic.⁵² By the middle of July, the Armistice Commission had sent a number of control commissions into the free zone, and within a month they were functioning throughout France.

In the German-Italian agreement of June 29, the French empire was also divided into separate areas of control. Italy was to determine the size and strength of the French armed forces in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Syria. While the Germans had the responsibility of regulating the activities of the French in Indochina, the West Indies, and French Equatorial Africa. These Axis controls were limited to governing the activities of the French armed forces, especially the army.

Germany regarded the interests of Italy as being of much more importance in the French African possessions than its own. The Italian Armistice Commission, however, had a difficult time forcing the French in North Africa to comply with the armistice. The Italians proved quite inept at directing the activity of the French North African army, and the French pursued a successful policy of hiding materiel and munitions from the Italian control commissions.⁵³

The 100,000 men assigned as the maximum limit for the French armistice army did not include the size of the French colonial army. In North Africa, the German Armistice Commission did not concern itself with any questions dealing with the French army in those areas under Italian control. However, it did stipulate that the French army be

⁵²Ibid., D, X, 55.

⁵³Testimony General Bergeret. Pétain, Le Procès, II, 712.

large enough to provide for the defense of their French possessions. At the beginning of July, the Italian Armistice Commission proposed that the French army in North Africa be reduced to 30,000 men, and the German Armistice Commission gave its complete agreement to the proposal.⁵⁴ This provisional size for the French North African army was quickly changed after the British naval actions in July. The German Armistice Commission agreed to the Italian proposal that the size of the French army in North Africa be expanded to 100,000 troops, and over 20,000 unarmed auxiliary workers.⁵⁵

Until September, the role of the German Armistice Commission in the French empire was limited strictly to providing for the technical supervision of the French compliance with the armistice. The possibility that French Equatorial Africa might defect to the Free French somewhat concerned the Germans, and this German fear increased as the Vichy control over the colony continued to deteriorate.⁵⁶

In the first two weeks of September, the French delegation requested that France be granted more freedom of action in the defense of its possessions. The Armistice Commission refused to make a decision on the basis that it was no longer purely a matter of interpreting the armistice. The problem had become a political issue and, therefore, any such program as the French visualized had to have the approval of the German foreign ministry.⁵⁷

⁵⁴Statement of General Revers. France During the Occupation, II, 752-53.

⁵⁵Statement of General Weygand. Ibid., 763.

⁵⁶Fuehrer Naval Conferences, II, 20.

⁵⁷D.G.F.P., D, XI, 6.

On September 11, the Armistice Commission informed France that the OKW, in conjunction with the Foreign Ministry, expected the Vichy government to eliminate all rebellions in the French colonies, especially Equatorial Africa. Furthermore, it was to provide Germany with the assurances that such a situation was not to occur again in any part of the French empire. The commission also furnished the French delegation with the information that further reinforcements from metropolitan France could, if necessary, be sent to the empire. If such an event occurred, France still was to channel all requests through the Armistice Commission.⁵⁸ This position indicated that Germany regarded developments in Africa as having evolved into the political realm although it was, as yet, unwilling to work outside the structure of the Armistice Commission.

Field Marshal Brauchitsch,⁵⁹ commander of the German army, met with Huntziger, now commander of the French armistice army, on September 26. Huntziger stated that France was actually fighting against a common enemy--that is, Britain. He requested that the Armistice Commission allow the French army some flexibility in North Africa to facilitate the defense of the French empire. Brauchitsch took a non-committal stand, for he felt that the French request was political in nature. He said that the French view was most interesting and that it was sure to be discussed with "the competent authority."⁶⁰ This "competent authority" or Hitler, had by this time come to regard the possible political advantages

⁵⁸D.F.C.A.A., I, 215-16.

⁵⁹Brauchitsch, Heinrich Alfred, 1881-1948. German army officer; Commander-in-Chief of German army (1938); relieved of command by Hitler (1941).

⁶⁰D.G.F.P., D, XI, 265.

of an alliance with France as being of much more benefit to the German war effort than what the armistice provided. As a consequence, the Armistice Commission was instructed to avoid any unpleasanties for the time being.⁶¹ On October 6, Stuepnagel received further instructions from the OKW that he was not to accept any French requests for reinforcements, for the whole role France was to play in the war was to be discussed on the political level in the near future. Added to these instructions was the comment: "the decision will turn out to be favorable for the French."⁶²

By the end of September, Germany visualized the French colonial army as being a necessary element for the defense of the French empire and as a consequence a protector of German interests in the area. Hitler had finally accepted the view of the OKW as to what France could contribute to the German war effort. This possible French contribution transcended the armistice, and therefore, it implied a political agreement, concluded outside the consideration of the Armistice Commission. In this scheme, France was to cooperate fully with Germany, and it was to accept German military measures affecting the French African colonies. From this initial task, "France's participation in the war against England could develop fully."⁶³ In providing for such a program, the Armistice Commission performed a very modest role. It was instructed to conduct its meetings in a conciliatory manner, making sure that nothing was done to offend the French government.⁶⁴

⁶¹Ibid., 267.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Hitler's directive no. 18, N.C.A., III, 403-04.

⁶⁴Conference of Goering, October 1, Ibid., VII, 543.

These instructions to the commission to use a degree of moderation indicated that Germany was now seriously considering placing more emphasis on the Mediterranean. The moderation was also to provide for a congenial atmosphere for the meeting of the two political heads of state at Montoire on October 24. As already mentioned, at Montoire Hitler made an obvious attempt to enlist the aid of France, and this aid was to be concentrated in Africa.

At Montoire, the Armistice Commission was assigned the specific duty of initiating all releases to the French in Africa, but this never came about. Soon after the Montoire conference, Laval went to Paris where he conferred with Abetz. They formulated a plan for the reconquering of French Equatorial Africa which had gone over to the Free French. This plan was initiated outside the Armistice Commission.

By the end of November, the Armistice Commission and its machinery were again ignored, this time by the OKW. Warlimont was sent to Paris to meet with Huntziger, Darlan, and Laval on November 29. At the meeting, Warlimont offered the French increased releases to its armed forces, especially those in northwest Africa. This area appeared to be the most important objective of any military cooperation with France.⁶⁵ Warlimont conducted a second meeting on December 10 in which the principal was established that the French alone could adequately protect their own African possessions. When Warlimont made his report of the second meeting to Hitler, the latter became upset over the unreliability of the French North African army. Hitler regarded the report and the meeting as being next to useless, and thus the proposals for close military

⁶⁵Warlimont, Inside Hitler's Headquarters, 123.

collaboration between Germany and France, never very realistic to begin with, were discarded.

This attitude, combined with Laval's dismissal on December 13, produced a feeling in Berlin that there was little hope of knitting the interests of the two countries together in any military adventure, and so the Armistice Commission again became the agency through which all military questions were answered.

IV

Germany, soon after signing the armistice with France, began to exploit the wealth of France in order to facilitate the German war effort. The Armistice Commission initially was to conduct such a program through its executive decisions on the armistice.

Germany claimed various economic rights in occupied zone based on Articles 3, 17, and 21 of the armistice. By Article 3, Germany had all the rights of an occupying power. Germany interpreted these rights to mean that it could make any claim on the French economy that was considered necessary for the war effort against Britain, and these claims exceeded the rights granted to an occupying power by international law.⁶⁶ By Article 17, Germany claim the right to safeguard all economic assets and supplies in the occupied zone. Article 21 simply guaranteed the implementation of the other two articles.⁶⁷

The German exploitation phase in occupied France lasted through

⁶⁶In reference to the Hague Rules of Land Warfare formed at the fourth Hague convention of 1907.

⁶⁷Circular of commissioner of Four Year Plan, July 5. D.G.F.P., D, X, 128.

September, 1940. The task of all German agencies in France was to collect booty, for the German goal "is [sic] to get out of France, through seizure or purchase at infinitesimal prices the materials of use for the German armament."⁶⁸

Since the conclusion of the armistice, Goering,⁶⁹ as minister of the German Four Year Plan, advocated that an Economic Delegation be set up paralleling the Armistice Commission in authority but with the function of dealing with all aspects of the French economy.⁷⁰ On July 4, Hemmen⁷¹ was appointed chairman of the Economic Delegation and was instructed to perform two primary functions in France. He was to implement the economic terms of the armistice and, also, to conduct negotiations with the French government outside the realm of the armistice. The Economic Delegation's goal was "to exploit the economic potential of the unoccupied territory in the service of the German war economy."⁷²

The creation of the Economic Delegation left only one segment of the French economy under the control of the Armistice Commission--the

⁶⁸From history of War Economy and Armament Staff in France. N.C.A., VII, 482.

⁶⁹Goering, Hermann, 1893-1946. German politician. Minister of air force and minister of interior (1933); commissar for Four Year Plan (1936); field marshal (1938); president of council for war economy (1940).

⁷⁰Halder, Private War Journal, IV, 104.

⁷¹Hemmen, Hans Richard. Chairman of the Special Commission on Economic Questions with the German Armistice Commission.

⁷²Circular for Four Year Plan, July 5. D.G.F.P., D, X, 129. The Economic Delegation received its instructions from various sources, for both Ribbentrop and Goering claimed authority over Hemmen. When Hemmen was named chairman, Ribbentrop actively attacked this decision, because Goering claimed the right of giving orders to Hemmen. This question of competence was finally regulated to the advantage of Ribbentrop.

French war industries. Germany defined war industries as the production of any commodity which had a definite value to the German war effort.

The Armistice Commission dealt with the French war industries on two levels, one for the occupied zone, and another for the free zone. In the occupied zone, it followed a policy of moderation in comparison to other German agencies. On July 4, the OKW instructed the commission to mobilize the French industries in an indirect fashion only,⁷³ and hereafter, it demanded only the French production of articles which were urgently needed for Germany's war effort. This moderate approach was soon superseded by other German agencies which began to give directions to the military administration in occupied France for the extensive mobilization of French industries. On August 26, Goering released a general order that the economies of all occupied western territories were to be systematically exploited for the benefit of the German economy.⁷⁴ This directive provided for the widespread requisitioning of the French economy, both of finished products and raw materials.

The French government quickly protested this economic policy to the Armistice Commission. On September 2, the commission explained that German requests for French war products in the occupied zone depended upon the future development of the war. Furthermore, Germany reserved the right to make any claim, within reason, on the French economy.⁷⁵ These German claims soon proved to be quite extensive, so extensive that by October large quantities of French raw materials and finished goods

⁷³D.G.F.P., D, X, 118.

⁷⁴N.C.A., VII, 608-09 passim.

⁷⁵Letter from Stuelpnagel to Huntziger, D.F.C.A.A., I, 215.

were shipped either directly to Germany or dispersed to the German armed forces stationed in France. By the end of 1940, occupied France contributed nearly five million tons of iron to the German war economy. This German plundering was also extended to include the French transportation industries in the occupied zone, in which a large number of railroad freight cars, trucks, and other vehicles were sent to Germany.⁷⁶ The role of the Armistice Commission in this German activity was primarily that of informing the French of the reasons for this economic policy in the occupied zone.

On questions concerning the French war industries in the free zone, the Armistice Commission had a more positive and clear role than in occupied France. Throughout July and August, all German orders for French military products in the free zone were channeled through the commission. Germany followed a very moderate commercial policy and the commission based all economic transactions on free exchange, in which purchases could be made only in the normal fashion of commercial exchange between the two countries.⁷⁷ On September 2, the commission informed the French that in the future all orders for commercial exchange between German and French firms were to be conducted on a private basis, bypassing the commission.⁷⁸

By Article 6 of the armistice, all manufacturing of war materiel in the unoccupied zone was to be stopped. The ban was soon lifted, but

⁷⁶Memorandum of General Thomas, French military command. N.M.T., XIII, 795.

⁷⁷D.G.F.P., D, X, 118.

⁷⁸D.F.C.A.A., I, 215-16.

the commission retained the right to supervise the production of war materiel, and it sent control commissions into the free zone to supervise the industries as they were released from the armistice restrictions.

Through 1940, the Armistice Commission took little interest in the economy of the French empire, for Germany regarded the economic potential of these areas as being of slight importance. Germany also had concluded an agreement with Italy in which German economic interests were limited to the west coast of Africa, Equatorial Africa, and Indochina.⁷⁹ Finally, the Germans were quite ignorant of the amounts of materiel the French had concealed in their overseas possessions. The Germans had no coherent economic policy to apply to the French empire; to the Germans "it is [sic] not quite clear what we really want there."⁸⁰

V

The German-French armistice placed definite limits on the extent of political interaction that could be initiated between the two states, and initially, the Armistice Commission was the only communication link between Germany and France. As already mentioned, by July the German military administration in the occupied zone was placed outside the control of the commission. Its duties in the occupied zone became those of explaining German policies to the Vichy regime, and when necessary assuming the role of negotiator dealing with specific points of the German administration in the occupied zone.

On August 5, the French delegation presented a note to the

⁷⁹German-Italian agreement, August 17. D.G.F.P., D, X, 503.

⁸⁰Halder, Private War Journal, IV, 104.

Armistice Commission protesting German policies in Alsace and Lorraine.⁸¹ The commission received instructions to treat the French note in a "dilatatory manner."⁸² By the middle of November, Germany had assumed complete control over the administration of Alsace and Lorraine. It began an expulsion policy of undesirable elements, and by December over forty-one trainloads of deportees were shipped to unoccupied France.⁸³ The French made repeated protests to the commission over this action, but they were met with stubborn silence by the commission.

Article 3 of the armistice provided for the eventual return of the French government to Paris. Through the summer, the Vichy regime repeatedly expressed the desire to see this clause fulfilled. The Armistice Commission repeatedly responded that while in principle Germany had no objections to the French government returning to Paris, such action could not be initiated through the commission, for it lacked the technical orders to authorize such an act.⁸⁴

The commission made it clear that it had only the authority to discuss questions involving the relations between Germany and Vichy France. However, its authority was soon subordinated as France and Germany found other avenues to approach each other in the political field. By early July, the French minister of interior had established contacts with the German military command in occupied France. On July

⁸¹By the middle of July, a German civil administration was introduced in Alsace and Lorraine. On July 24, they were included in the German custom union.

⁸²D.G.F.P., D, X, 499.

⁸³D.F.C.A.A., II, 354.

⁸⁴Ibid., I, 108-09.

27, representatives of the French ministry of interior and German security police in France met at Paris and formed a liaison between the German occupation zone and Vichy France.⁸⁵ This liaison was to be performed by Otto Abetz,⁸⁶ who since July 3 had attached himself to the military occupation commander of Paris as a representative of the German foreign ministry.

Abetz had always attempted to establish political contacts with the Vichy government. The Vichy regime proved receptive, for it had for some time attempted to establish other means of political contact with Germany, than that provided by the Armistice Commission. At the end of July, Abetz was recalled to Germany, where the title of ambassador in France was conferred to him. He was placed in a curious position since France and Germany were still technically at war, a situation which precluded any direct exchange of diplomatic agents. Nevertheless, Abetz was to bear

the sole responsibility for dealing with all political questions in occupied and unoccupied France. Insofar as his functions affect military interests, Ambassador Abetz will act in conjunction with the military commander in France.⁸⁷

From this point, the Armistice Commission did not concern itself with political matters, other than in instances of decisions in military matters affecting the political atmosphere between Germany and France.

As political questions assumed more importance in the fall of

⁸⁵D.G.F.P., D, X, 342.

⁸⁶Abetz, Otto, 1903-1958. German propagandist and official. Appointed (August, 1940) ambassador to Vichy and high commissioner of occupied France.

⁸⁷D.G.F.P., D, X, 408.

1940, Abetz's office was further strengthened. His office was given the designation "German Embassy in Paris," and it was assigned to keep in constant touch with the Vichy regime.⁸⁸

Abetz, a proud and vain man, was quite jealous of his new-found position and he continually attempted to consolidate his own position with respect to competing agencies, one of which was the Armistice Commission. When Laval was dismissed from the Vichy government on December 13, Abetz attempted to reinstate him. He took this action on his own initiative for he feared that without Laval the channel from the Armistice Commission to Vichy would be reopened and therefore weaken his own position.⁸⁹

⁸⁸Ibid., D, XI, 638.

⁸⁹Hubert Cole, Laval, a Biography (New York: 1963), 159.

Chapter IV. January - December, 1941

Soon after the dismissal of Laval from the Vichy government, Flandin¹ assumed the key positions of vice-premier and minister of foreign affairs. He attempted to retain some ties between France and Germany, but the Germans were suspicious and approached France with caution. This attitude did not mean that all relations were broken, for the problems of the occupation were discussed daily in the Armistice Commission as well as on a local level through the German military government and the German embassy in Paris. At Wiesbaden, the Armistice Commission continued to discuss the size, organization, and armament of the French armed forces at home and overseas. But there was a noticeable change in the tone of these discussions for the Germans assumed a wait-and-see attitude. Hitler did not intend to be made a fool by the unsettled political situation in France.²

The Germans were very troubled in the early months of 1941 over their position in the Mediterranean. By the middle of January, the British had consolidated their position in the Middle East and North Africa, largely at the expense of the Italians. The British navy had scored impressive victories, and the Italian army also had received a series of humiliating defeats in Africa. On January 20, Hitler concluded that Gibraltar was the key to success in the Mediterranean. He reasoned

¹Flandin, Pierre, 1889-1958. French statesman and politician. Premier of France (1934-35); minister of foreign affairs (1936; 1940-41 in Vichy regime).

²D.G.F.P., D, XI, 1217.

that with it the Germans could establish a foothold in North Africa and "thus put an end to Weygand's blackmail."³

On February 8, the Armistice Commission received a series of directives from the OKW. These orders stated that the Laval crisis of December 13 had destroyed all hope of collaboration between Germany and France, and that the reestablishment of congenial ties had to be initiated by France. Until such occurred, the armistice terms were to be the sole foundation of German-French relations, although the concessions in the armistice already given were to remain in force.⁴ The directives solidified the commission's policy into a harsh position, and covered all aspects of its responsibility except for the French navy. No mention of the navy was made throughout the lengthy report, although it implied that the strict sailing ban on the main French fleet at Toulon was to remain in force.

From the beginning of February, Darlan⁵ began soliciting collaboration with Germany, a collaboration that went far beyond the terms of the armistice.⁶ The French appeasement attempts soon became evident even in the activity of the French delegation at Wiesbaden where at the

³N.C.A., VI, 942-43. This was in reference to Weygand's cool attitude toward any form of collaboration other than what was provided by a strict interpretation of the armistice. Weygand was by now the commander of the French North African army.

⁴Memorandum of Political Division, February 14. D.G.F.P., D, XII, 98-99 passim.

⁵In early February, Darlan assumed the functions in Vichy of vice-premier, minister for foreign affairs, minister of navy, and minister of the interior.

⁶Foreign Relations of U.S.; Diplomatic Papers, Annual Report, 1941, II, 192. Hereafter cited as Foreign Relations of U.S.

end of April, it agreed to provide Rommel's Afrika Korps⁷ with supplies. This German force was in desperate need of provisions because of the precarious position of the Axis supply lines in the Mediterranean.

The principal reason for the German policy change toward France was not because of the French attitude, although it no doubt prepared the way for what followed. The immediate reason for the change was due to disturbances in the Middle East.

Toward the end of March, Rasid Ali al-Gaylani⁸ led a revolt against the pro-British regent in Iraq. Rasid Ali, with the support of a group of Iraqi generals known as the "golden square," quickly became a factor the Axis hoped to exploit. He appealed for German aid, and it was forthcoming on a limited scale. This action tied in with some unofficial talk of coordinating German penetration in the Middle East with the possible attack on Russia. German support for the Iraqi rebels, with Rommel's force on the western Egyptian border, would provide the southern portion of the grand pincer that would squeeze the British out of the Middle East.⁹

⁷Rommel, Erwin, 1891-1944. German general; commander of German forces in Africa (1941-43); held defense posts in western Europe at time of Allied invasion of Normandy (June, 1944).

In view of the critical situation of the Italians in Africa, Rommel, on February 6, 1941, was ordered to prepare the ground for the sending of two German divisions--one light and one panzer--to Libya. Rommel was to command this force, which became known as the Afrika Korps. He was initially subordinate to Marshal Graziani, the Italian commander in Africa. German troops began to enter the scene by the middle of February and by April the construction of this force was completed.

⁸Rasid Ali al-Gaylani. Iraq minister president (April-June, 1941); subsequently in exile in Iran.

⁹Warlimont, Inside Hitler's Headquarters, 132.

To provide the Iraqi rebels with aid, Germany had to acquire the right of transit through the French mandate of Syria, for Vichy approval was necessary for the use of the Syrian airfields by Germany. Therefore, the Germans became receptive to high level political negotiations with the French. Agreements were signed on May 5 and 6 which gave Germany the right to utilize Syrian airfields for re-fueling purposes. Furthermore, Germany could demand the French surrender of some war materiel stock-piled in the French mandate for transfer to the Iraqi rebels.¹⁰

Darlan was not satisfied with these limited agreements for he wanted the negotiations to mature more fully. Developments in the Middle East made such talks possible, for Britain's position was becoming more and more precarious. Rommel's Afrika Korps had driven to the edge of Egypt, and Britain's prestige had suffered considerably from the Greek campaign and its evacuation of Crete.¹¹ Darlan concluded that the only course for France to follow was closer collaboration with Germany, for it appeared that the latter was soon to win the war.¹²

Soon after the agreement of May 6, Darlan was invited to see Hitler in Germany, but the only significance of the meeting was to provide a foundation for further talks. New negotiations were immediately

¹⁰D.G.F.P., D, XII, 740-41 passim.

¹¹On October 24, 1940, Italy invaded Albania and Greece. The Italians soon ran into stiff Greek resistance. Britain sent army units into Greece. Germany came to the assistance of the Italians, and quickly overran the Greek and British defenses. Soon after, Germany invaded Crete and despite a brave British resistance it occupied the island.

¹²Report of Abetz, May 5. D.G.F.P., D, XII, 720.

undertaken in Paris. During these, the activity of the Armistice Commission was reduced to discussing only minor details of the German occupation in metropolitan France.¹³ The negotiations resulted, on May 28, in the Paris protocol which was divided into three sections, each dealing with a separate segment of the French empire. The first part confirmed the earlier agreement on Syria. The second section allowed the Germans to use the port of Bizerte to unload supplies for German troops in Africa. The French further agreed to release specified amounts of war materiel in North Africa to the Afrika Korps. In compensation, limited concessions were granted to the French North African armed forces. The third part of the protocol was concerned with West Africa where German submarines were to operate from Dakar, and in return France was allowed to bolster the land defenses of West Africa.

The third section of the protocol was tied to a complementary protocol. It stated that the use of Dakar by the German navy produced the danger of a strong British reaction, and therefore the terms could not be implemented until adequate reinforcements were sent to West Africa. Furthermore, the complementary protocol stated that Germany was to provide France with a series of economic and political concessions which were to justify the French government's signing of the main protocol.¹⁴

The complementary protocol was an escape clause for the French. The Vichy regime adopted the view that any compliance with the military terms of the main protocol was to be preceded by German political and

¹³D.F.C.A.A., IV, 451.

¹⁴Paris protocol. D.G.F.P., D, XII, 892-900 passim.

economic concessions. Germany, on the other hand, insisted that the military terms were to be treated completely separate from the consideration of political and economic concessions.

As seen above, Berlin and Vichy were poles apart in their interpretation of the Paris protocol. These divergent views were to lead to long and heated discussions, many of which were channeled through the Armistice Commission.

Soon after the signing of the Paris protocol, Germany's relations with France underwent extensive change, and this was caused by two external events. On June 8, British and Free French forces attacked Syria. The Vichy forces, led by General Dentz,¹⁵ put up an energetic defense, but the French Levant army and navy were too ill-equipped and weak to support any prolonged defense. Although the German Armistice Commission did offer some assistance it came too late to be of any value. Therefore, on July 14, Dentz signed the armistice of Saint Jean-d'Acre with Britain. By its terms, Syria and Lebanon were occupied by the "Allies" and all French materiel and installations were transferred to the British.¹⁶ The most important event affecting German-French relations, however, was the German invasion of Russia (Operation Barbarossa). Through the early part of June, Germany was preoccupied with its preparations for Operation Barbarossa. This preoccupation was especially felt in the Armistice Commission where, in the week following the German invasion of Russia, nothing of significance was discussed. The Russian

¹⁵Dentz, Henri. High commissioner in Syria and Lebanon, and commander-in-chief of French forces in the Levant to July, 1941.

¹⁶Text of Saint Jean-d'Acre accord. D.F.C.A.A., IV, 627-29 passim.

affair "dominated all the activity of the Reich; it . . . eclipsed the affair of Syria and perhaps even the famous project of the attack on the Suez."¹⁷

Up to this time, the German action in North Africa and in the Balkans had been directed essentially against Britain. Now these operations were completely overshadowed by the Russian campaign, and consequently all German activity in the Mediterranean was placed on the defensive.¹⁸ Hitler reasoned that all Russian resistance would be smashed within a few months, and then Germany would be able to turn its attention again to the Middle East. He felt that once Russia was defeated the British position in the Mediterranean could be assaulted by a two-pronged attack from Libya through Egypt, and from Bulgaria through Turkey.¹⁹ Hitler contemplated a large scale offensive in North Africa in the autumn of 1941, with the ultimate objective of crushing all British resistance.

By the end of August, Hitler reasoned that France was to be subordinated to a secondary position until all Russian resistance was crushed. Furthermore, he began to regard the French with distrust.²⁰ Therefore, the German campaign in Russia broadened the scale of the war and produced a gradual decrease in the importance of France. The Germans began to regard France solely in terms of how much could be extracted from it for the German war effort.

¹⁷D.F.C.A.A., IV, 554.

¹⁸Warlimont, Inside Hitler's Headquarters, 129.

¹⁹Hitler's directive no. 32. Ibid., 132.

²⁰Conversation between Hitler and Mussolini, August 25, 1941. D.G.F.P., D, XIII, 386.

I

The German suspicion of French duplicity, in early 1941, was evident in the Armistice Commission's consideration of the French navy. While the concessions already granted to the French were maintained, the commission gave no further naval grants to the French. In the early months of 1941, there was the possibility that the political situation in France would necessitate German intervention in the unoccupied zone. If such action occurred, the Germans wanted the assurance that the French fleet at Toulon would not be able to escape. On January 9, Hitler stated "if France became troublesome she will be crushed completely. Under no circumstances must the French fleet be allowed to get away from us; it must either be captured or destroyed."²¹

More important than the possible capture of the French fleet was the German hope of ejecting the British from the Mediterranean. In this scheme, the French fleet was ignored other than what it could provide for the protection of the French empire. Therefore, the Armistice Commission took little interest in the French navy, although it was closely watched by German control commissions. This same supervision was extended to the French naval industries, and the commission made it clear that its approval was necessary for all manufacturing of naval equipment.²²

Vogl sent a letter to Doyen, on April 9, in which he explained that Germany and Italy had just previously concluded an agreement for

²¹Fuehrer Naval Conferences, I, 3.

²²D.F.C.A.A., IV, 168-69 passim.

the control of French marine traffic in the Mediterranean littoral. Germany was to control all traffic from the Pyrenees frontier to the mouth of the Rhône. Marseille was governed by a mixed German-Italian commission. An Italian control commission assumed responsibility for traffic control from the Rhône to the French-Italian border.²³

From now until the end of 1941, the Armistice Commission almost completely ignored the French navy, for the German policy was to exclude it from any concessions granted to Vichy.

II

As in naval matters, the Armistice Commission did not deliberate to any great extent on the French air force through 1941. By the end of 1940, the major questions on the future of the French air force were answered, although the French still made repeated requests for the expansion of their metropolitan air defenses. The Armistice Commission referred the requests to the OKW, and it immediately received instructions to deny them. The OKW did not consider the danger of British attacks as sufficient to warrant any increase in the French air force. The commission was also instructed to step up the process of shipping French aircraft materiel to Germany and to continue its search for materiel the French had hidden.²⁴

Through the winter and spring of 1941, the French air force was

²³Letter Vogl to Doyen, April 9. Ibid., IV, 300-02. General Paul Doyen was French general and chairman of French delegation at Wiesbaden from September 1940 to July 1941. He later commanded French forces against Axis in southeastern France, 1944. General Vogl was German general and president of the Armistice Commission from February 1941 to December 1942.

²⁴D.F.C.A.A., III, 453-54.

not discussed by the commission. It regarded the concessions already granted to the French as sufficient for the air defense of France.

The Paris protocol injected a new condition to be considered by the commission, for it provided Germany with the right to utilize the air facilities in Syria. On June 11, the commission pressured the French government into allowing the Luftwaffe to land in Syria and use French fuel stocks in the area.²⁵ The French agreed in principle to the demand, but they attempted to limit the volume of German air traffic to Syria. They complained that to assist the Luftwaffe would provide Britain with the excuse to take military action against France.²⁶

In 1941, the Armistice Commission refused to release any more French aircraft to the French empire. Nevertheless by November, the French had accumulated in Africa eight pursuit groups (group = fourteen planes), five reconnaissance groups, thirteen bomber groups, and two transport groups; making a total of twenty-eight groups with 400 planes. The French navy had a total of seventeen groups with more than 100 planes.²⁷

III

At the beginning of 1941, the Armistice Commission allowed the French to organize a national guard unit. Soon after, the commission assumed an uncompromising attitude and through the rest of the year it denied all French requests for expansion of the metropolitan army.²⁸

²⁵Ibid., IV. 543.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷France During the Occupation, II, 766-67.

²⁸D.F.C.A.A., III, 382.

It insisted that the French army in the free zone be kept at a minimum.

In January, the Armistice Commission showed a considerable interest in the French stock-piles of war materiel. On January 13, the commission assumed the right to delegate the future use of all military supplies found in the occupied zone, and this amount was to be determined by the needs of the German war effort.²⁹

The commission next turned its attention to the French stock-piles in the free zone. The Germans were especially interested in acquiring 75mm cannons and chemical products. The commission requested that France release this materiel but the French handled the German proposals in a dilatory manner.³⁰ Nothing further was discussed on the subject until October when the commission concluded a secret agreement with France in which the latter released certain moveable materiel from the stock-piles.³¹

By 1941, the Armistice Commission had sent a large number of control commissions into the free zone. The French attitude toward the control commissions was one of toleration. The commissions could not be ignored, but all the same the French offered them little hospitality. This attitude compelled Stuepnagel to warn the French delegation that if these incidents against the commissions continued Germany was going to initiate grave reprisals, and he demanded that the French obstruction tactics be stopped. Finally, he insisted on clarifying certain "questions of principle." First, the control commissions had the right to

²⁹Ibid., III, 474.

³⁰Ibid., IV, 1-2.

³¹Ibid., V, 226.

enter all French military installations, and secondly, the members of the commissions enjoyed extraterritorial rights.³²

These control commissions had evolved, by April, into something quite different than originally contemplated by the French. They imposed a strict supervision over all French military activity in France, and they reflected the German policy of demanding that the French strictly comply with the armistice terms in metropolitan France. By April, over thirty control commissions were operating in the free zone.³³ From now until the end of 1941, the Armistice Commission's attention was distracted by developments in the French empire, and therefore disregarded these commissions.

At the beginning of 1941, German and Italian controls in French Africa were limited to two civilian delegates of the Armistice Commission at Casablanca, and a limited number of Italian control personnel in North Africa. The French placed fairly strict limitations on the activity of these control commissions, and wherever they went a French official accompanied them. The French especially held the Italian delegates in high contempt, and Weygand continually referred to them as those from "that execrable nation."³⁴

³²D.F.C.A.A., IV, 125-29 passim. Extraterritorial rights is the partial setting aside of the domestic jurisdiction of a state in favor of foreign citizens and properties found in the territory of this state. In other words, based on custom and/or treaties, certain individuals or properties are regarded as being beyond the jurisdiction of the state in whose territory they happen to be located.

³³Ibid., IV, 198.

³⁴Minister in Portugal to U.S. Secretary of State, January, 1941. Foreign Relations of U.S., 1941, II, 209.

This state of affairs was intolerable, for Germany felt that action had to be taken to block the British attempts to consolidate their position in the Mediterranean. The first step was to guarantee the continued tranquility of the French possessions, and thus secure one flank of the Axis position in the Mediterranean. On January 15, the Armistice Commission informed the French that it was installing a military control commission at Casablanca.³⁵ Stuelpnagel explained that it was to assist the Italians, but he also implied that the French attitude in North Africa was the primary reason for German intervention. The French attitude of stubborn resistance and snobbishness had caused considerable apprehension, and the German control commission was to guarantee the French compliance with the armistice.³⁶

As already mentioned, by February the German policy toward France had become quite harsh and all interaction between the two states was again governed by the armistice. The commission carefully watched the size and activity of the French North African army for it feared that the military concessions Germany had granted the French would one day be employed against its allies, and therefore also against Germany. By this time, the Italians had proved themselves completely unable to provide for close supervision of the French empire. In the light of this the Armistice Commission arranged for the assumption of "German military control" over Morocco.³⁷

³⁵D.F.C.A.A., III, 447.

³⁶Ibid., III, 448.

³⁷OKW directive, February 14, 1941. D.G.F.P., D, XII, 98-99.

By the end of March, the German control commission was comfortably established in Morocco, and consisted of over 200 personnel under the command of General Schulthesiss.³⁸ In the next few months, the French delegation made repeated efforts to limit the scope of the control commission's powers, but it soon became apparent that the Germans were going to curtail many of the French "illegal" activities. On April 18, General Vogl informed the French government that the North African control commission had powers identical to those in metropolitan France.³⁹

As the congenial relations between Germany and France began to wane in the summer of 1941, Germany inserted stricter controls in French North Africa. German interest now centered on the establishment of consulates in North Africa. The German desire to implant consulates there was primarily in response to the expansion of United States consulates in the same area.⁴⁰ The Vichy regime was subjected to steady German pressure, and it finally gave in to the German demands. Accordingly, on July 15, General Weygand received an order to assist and treat in a favorable fashion these German missions.⁴¹

In late summer, the French military leaders in Africa attempted to subject the Germans to the same obstructive tactics that they had

³⁸D.F.C.A.A., IV, 242.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰The expansion of United States consulates was done to provide an adequate supervision of the implementation of the Weygand-Murphy accord. This agreement provided for an expansion of American trade to North Africa. The Americans were vice-consuls, and the French allowed them liberties and rights which normally were reserved to diplomatic missions.

⁴¹Weygand, Memoires, III, 451.

employed against the Italians. General Vogl quickly reacted to these French actions by informing General Weygand that the attitude of the French services toward the German inspection teams was "intolerable." Consequently, he was instructing the control commission to wear uniforms, arm themselves, and take "all measures of security which they deemed necessary because of the situation created by the attitude of the French services."⁴²

The Vichy loss of Equatorial Africa to the Free French, in early 1941, pressured the Armistice Commission into allowing the French North African army to expand to 120,000 men.⁴³ This increase was accomplished only by incorporating the goums or native troops into the ranks. In further discussions, the French insisted that the native troops were merely a police force, and therefore could not be counted as part of the army. By April, Weygand received permission to further increase the size of the colonial army to 127,000 men, which included 16,000 goums.⁴⁴

Up through April, a major concern of the Armistice Commission was to extract materiel from the French stock-piles for the Afrika Korps. On April 28, Vogl requested that France deliver certain vehicles to the frontier of Tripolitana for use by the Afrika Korps from French stock-piles in North Africa.⁴⁵ The French agreed in principle and promised to deliver a limited number of vehicles. However, they were not prepared

⁴²D.F.C.A.A., V, 229.

⁴³Ibid., III, 382.

⁴⁴Statement by Weygand, France During the Occupation, II, 763-64.

⁴⁵D.F.C.A.A., IV, 335-36.

to make any large commitment for they felt that such an action involved political issues, and therefore was outside the authority of the French delegation.

Through May, many issues involving the French colonies were negotiated, but these discussions were on a political level and the Armistice Commission was not involved. The commission's quiescence on French colonial affairs was mitigated, on June 10, when it received instructions to exploit the obligations that France had made to assist the German war effort (Paris protocol). The commission was given the authority to negotiate in all future German demands, and to guarantee the implementation of the services within the "general framework" of the Paris protocol. In addition to these new duties, the commission was to continue to supervise the "execution of the French obligations arising out of the Armistice Treaty."⁴⁶

The Armistice Commission did not have the sole prerogative in supervising the Paris protocol, but had to share the honor with the embassy in Paris. The two agencies tried to coordinate their activity in a series of conferences at Paris. At these meetings, an attempt was made to formulate a basic policy to present to the French in connection with the execution of the Paris protocol. Their attempt failed because of the French insistence that their compliance with the military obligations depended upon the German fulfillment of the complementary protocol,

⁴⁶D.G.F.P., XII, 991-92. The instructions further stated that questions affecting Italian interests were to be directed to the Italian Armistice Commission. If any French wish directed to the Italians involved a German interest the German Armistice Commission was to take the liberty to apply the appropriate measures to acquire Italian agreement.

which provided for extensive German concessions in the political and economic fields.

Soon after the Paris meeting, the OKW sent further instructions to the Armistice Commission. It stated that the German armed forces were not in a position to seize the French bases needed by Germany (especially Dakar and Bizerte). Consequently, the commission was to conduct its negotiations in such a manner that the availability of the bases to Germany would be assured. It went on to say that the concessions offered to the French were to provide them with the means to defend their possessions, and this policy was to be speedily implemented to thwart the British and Free French activity in the French empire.⁴⁷

At the same time, Hitler issued directive no. 32, which dealt with the Middle East. It provided for a full-scale attack on the British in Egypt in the autumn of 1941.⁴⁸ The directive showed that the previous instructions to the Armistice Commission were designed to maintain the status quo in the Mediterranean until the Russian campaign was concluded.

Immediately after receiving the above instructions, the commission granted a series of important releases to the French colonial army. It liberated from prisoner-of-war camps 961 officers (including General Juin⁴⁹), 3,200 non-commissioned officers, and 2,686 specialists, and these personnel were to be sent directly to North Africa. It also

⁴⁷D.G.F.P., XII, 1033-34.

⁴⁸Warlimont, Inside Hitler's Headquarters, 132.

⁴⁹Juin, Alphonse. Commander of French forces in Morocco from August 1941; commander-in-chief of French forces in North Africa (November 1941).

authorized France to transport 8,000 personnel from the metropolitan army to North Africa. Finally, this expansion was accompanied by a proportional increase in arms, munitions, and equipment.⁵⁰ At this time, the French demands for more equipment and personnel in its empire were generally agreed to by the Germans.⁵¹

This generous German attitude did not last long, for the Germans expected immediate and spectacular results from the French in the defense of their empire by their total acceptance of the Paris protocol. Just the opposite occurred, for the French position in Syria soon became untenable. They hedged and imposed a variety of conditions in their compliance to the Paris protocol. Finally, the attitude of the French army commanders in Africa hindered the application of a broad collaboration, and this last factor worried the Germans the most. As a result, on June 20, the Armistice Commission sent a bitter complaint to the French government, which stated that its work in North Africa was being hamstrung by this French attitude.⁵²

By the end of July, tensions began to mount between Germany and France. In the Armistice Commission, Vogl complained that France was not complying with the Paris protocol, and that France was subordinating the practical realization of the agreement to a variety of unnecessary political considerations. The German conciliatory attitude was at an end, and from now on it was to have reservations toward any future French

⁵⁰D.F.C.A.A., IV, 484.

⁵¹Statement by General Revers. France During the Occupation, II, 757. Cf. Statement by General Weygand, Ibid., 764.

⁵²Consul general Cole at Algiers to U.S. Secretary of State. Foreign Relations of U.S., 1941, II, 385.

requests. These reservations concerned the position of the French North African army, for if France wanted to build up this force it had to regain the confidence of the OKW. This could be done only by complying with the Paris protocol terms concerned with Tunisia, and the supplying of Rommel's Afrika Korps.⁵³

The German attitude toward France had undergone a drastic change by August. There were no further attempts to appease the French, and all gestures of generosity were dropped. Through August, the Armistice Commission focused its attention on North Africa, for the situation of the French North African army also disturbed the Germans. They were suspicious of the stability of the French troops, and the commission reacted to this observation by strengthening the control commissions there.⁵⁴

The negotiations, at Wiesbaden, concerned with the implementation of the Paris protocol were, for all practical purposes, completely suspended until the end of September. On October 7, General Vogl, in a letter to General Beynet,⁵⁵ expressed the desire to re-open negotiations on military matters in the French empire. The French government agreed and made the first concession, on October 24, by transferring twenty 155mm cannons to the Afrika Korps.⁵⁶

These attempts to create a local détente were then expanded to

⁵³D.F.C.A.A., V, 5-10 passim.

⁵⁴Ibid., V, 89.

⁵⁵Beynet, General. French officer. President of the French delegation to the Armistice Commission (October 1-December 23, 1941).

⁵⁶D.F.C.A.A., V, 201-03 passim.

include Italy, and the negotiations became tripartite. In these conversations the Germans maintained a cautious attitude for they assayed French intentions as "maintaining an attitude of waiting which, basically, is not friendly to the Axis and are avoiding taking up any position until they have seen in which direction the balance of the war is finally going to tip."⁵⁷ General Vogl insisted that the tripartite negotiations be based on the Paris protocol, and all political questions be ignored.⁵⁸ This cool behavior indicated that the Germans were far from willing to grant any concessions to the French until they had concrete evidence that full collaboration was again in force. This was a condition that could only be fulfilled by the French acceptance in entirety of the Paris protocol.

This German attitude was an indirect cause of the dismissal of Weygand as commander of the French North African army. Berlin had applied considerable pressure on Vichy for his dismissal. For some months, Weygand had been a thorn in the side of the Germans because he had continually insisted that French-German relations be governed solely by the armistice and he had opposed the Paris protocol. By November, his tactics had so exasperated the Germans that Keitel had proposed to Canaris, chief of the Abwehr,⁵⁹ that Weygand be kidnapped and then murdered.⁶⁰

⁵⁷Conversation of Hitler and Ciano, October 26. Ciano, Diplomatic Papers, 457.

⁵⁸D.F.C.A.A., V, 274-77 passim.

⁵⁹The Abwehr was the foreign intelligence service of the OKW. Admiral Canarie, through most of the war, headed this German intelligence service.

⁶⁰Karl Abshagen, Canaris, Patriot und Weltbuerger, (Stuttgart: 1957), 293.

The Armistice Commission, however, provided the stimulus which forced the Vichy regime to remove Weygand.⁶¹ On November 12, Vogl indicated that no further concessions were to be granted to the French in North Africa "if the bad spirit [created by Weygand] was not dispersed by appropriate measures."⁶²

Nevertheless, the dismissal of Weygand, on November 18, did not improve German-French relations. By this time, Hitler was completely disillusioned in the French, for "there are so many Weygands in France that any one of them could take the role of the old retired general tomorrow."⁶³ The Germans seriously questioned the sincerity of the French for:

they want to change the cards on the table and to let it be forgotten that they are a conquered country. This is a game which they cannot be permitted to play.⁶⁴

IV

By the beginning of 1941, the German economic exploitation of occupied France had clearly entered a new phase. The primary objective was still to extract raw materials and finished products from France, but it was now done through regular purchases adapted to the German

⁶¹There was also a French political reason for Weygand's fall. Darlan worked for his dismissal, for a great deal of rivalry existed between the two men. Weygand was an obstacle to Darlan's program of cooperation with Germany. Weygand was also a potential political opponent to Darlan.

⁶²D.F.C.A.A., V, 277.

⁶³Conversation Hitler to Ciano. As quoted in Langer, Undeclared War, 769.

⁶⁴Conversation Ribbentrop to Ciano. Ciano, Diplomatic Papers, 462.

monetary level. By the end of 1941, approximately 48,000 tons of copper, 9,000 tons of lead, and 2,000 tons of tin and other non-ferrous metals were transferred to Germany.⁶⁵ The Armistice Commission did not take in this activity because its original position of sole caretaker of the economic terms of the armistice was taken over by other German agencies. The two most important German organizations which assumed this function were the Special Economic delegation, and the War Economy and Armament Staff in France.⁶⁶ The latter agency, by the middle of 1941, closely supervised all plants in France which were manufacturing armaments for Germany.⁶⁷

Through the winter of 1941, the Armistice Commission was preoccupied with setting up controls over the armament industries in the free zone. At the beginning of the year, the French delegation sent a note to the commission complaining of the friction the armament control commissions caused in France. Stuelpnagel responded that the control commissions were in the free zone on the basis of Article 6 of the armistice.⁶⁸ The German position was further solidified, on March 15, when Stuelpnagel stated that France was to comply with all measures of

⁶⁵Report by military commander, French administrative staff, September 10, 1942. N.M.T., XIII, 795.

⁶⁶The War Economy and Armament Staff or Ruestung was also charged with control of war industries. It was subordinated to the OKW, the military commander in France, and to the Minister of Armament of the Reich (Speer).

⁶⁷N.C.A., VII, 482.

⁶⁸D.F.C.A.A., III, 423. He was referring to that part of Article 6 that reads: 'Further manufacturing of war materiel in occupied territory is to be stopped immediately.'

control the commission felt applicable to the terms of the armistice, "and its consequences."⁶⁹ Soon after, the commission made extensive demands on the French industries for munitions of large caliber, other war materiel, car parts, chemical products, and machine tools.⁷⁰

The German policy of harnessing the industries of unoccupied France were soon channeled into one consideration--that of the French aircraft industries. German orders began to pour into the free zone for airplanes and airplane parts.⁷¹ On April 22, the Armistice Commission concluded an agreement with France which contained a series of directives for the execution of a German-French program of airplane construction by the French aircraft industry. The directives stipulated that it was Germany's intention to place large orders in the French aircraft industry. A program of limited economic collaboration was to be initiated by which France was to draw up a program, with German approval, indicating the military and commercial aircraft it needed. A ratio was then to be established in which for every five planes delivered to Germany, France was allowed to keep one. The directives also allowed German aircraft firms to communicate directly with their French counterparts.⁷²

Although the Armistice Commission negotiated this agreement, it had little control over the program, for it was initiated and put into

⁶⁹D.F.C.A.A., IV, 97.

⁷⁰Ibid., IV, 201.

⁷¹Foreign Relations of U.S., 1941, II, 142.

⁷²Directives of the minister of the Reich. D.F.C.A.A., V, 352-57 passim.

operation by other German agencies. The technical control of the program was exercised by the German Delegation of the Committee of Industry which was subordinated to the German Ministry of Armament.

In the agreement of April 22, it was established that the French aircraft production was to be conducted in both French zones. Through the summer and autumn of 1941, innumerable difficulties hindered the application of this program, and on November 2, the commission halted all aircraft construction in the free zone. The French delegation quickly protested that the German action was unnecessary for only civilian aircraft were being produced in the free zone. General Vogl countered that, according to Article 6 of the armistice, all fabrication of war materiel in the free zone was to be prohibited, and to him the construction of civilian aircraft fell in this category.⁷³

The intransigent position of the Armistice Commission on French war industries by the autumn of 1941 showed the evolution of Germany's policy toward France. The German hopes for economic collaboration with France had suffered a premature death, and German suspicion of French motives placed a heavy strain on the economic contacts between the two states, a strain that was particularly evident in the Armistice Commission.

Through 1941, the commission took little interest in the economy of the French colonies. What interests Germany did have in the area, especially that of foreign trade with the French empire, were handled by the Special Economic delegation.

⁷³D.F.C.A.A., V, 233.

V

By the German-French armistice, the Armistice Commission was the sole intermediary between Berlin and Vichy. This position had rapidly deteriorated, especially at the political level. At the beginning of 1941, the German ambassador in France, Otto Abetz, had assumed a position of singular importance to German-French relations, and it was from his office that almost all important political negotiations were initiated and carried out.

The commission deliberated on only two problems of the occupied zone in 1941. The first issue was over Alsace and Lorraine, where by 1941 the Germans had come to regard the provinces as being completely separated from France. While the French were powerless to do anything about this state of affairs they still raised shrill protests over certain German tactics there. On January 12, the French delegation protested the German policy of mass expulsion of "undesirable elements" from these provinces. Hencke⁷⁴ responded that the Armistice Commission would not receive the French note, and he added that the German mass expulsions were almost completed and, therefore, it was completely useless for the French to persist in such complaints.⁷⁵

Until the middle of July, Germany contented itself with individual expulsions from Alsace and Lorraine, but at the end of July, Germany began to eject persons of French descent in large numbers from the

⁷⁴Hencke, Andor. Service counselor with rank of minister; representative of the German foreign ministry with the German Armistice Commission (July 1940-May 1941).

⁷⁵D.F.C.A.A., III, 405-07 passim.

provinces. The French sent a new series of protests to the Armistice Commission, but the commission simply refused to accept them.⁷⁶

The other political issue in the occupied zone which the Armistice Commission dealt with involved the French protest of the use of French civilians to guard the German lines of communication and military installations. The commission settled this issue by simply refusing to receive the French protest note. It regarded the problem as being within the scope of the German military commander's jurisdiction, and therefore the French government was to refer all correspondence on the subject to him.⁷⁷

Through 1941, the Armistice Commission took little interest in the demarcation line dividing France. It refused to assume any responsibility for its maintenance which was regarded as a political issue and outside the control of the commission.

The commission dealt with only one political issue in the free zone and this centered around the application of Article 19 of the armistice. This article stipulated that Germany could claim the extradition of all German nationals who were residing in France at the conclusion of hostilities, and the commission did employ the article to collect a number of German army deserters. The French representative of foreign affairs at Wiesbaden complained that the German point of view was contrary to the "rights of man," and therefore could not be applied to

⁷⁶D.F.C.A.A., V, 132. The French persisted in such a fashion until September, 1942, when General Vogl was provoked into demanding an apology from the French, and a promise not to refer to the subject again. The French complied with his demand.

⁷⁷Ibid., V, 216.

Article 19. His German counterpart, Welck,⁷⁸ responded that as far as Berlin was concerned the deserters were the same as "criminals of common law."⁷⁹

Through 1941, the Armistice Commission took little interest in the political affairs of France, and even when it did the action was always and only in response to French protests.

⁷⁸Welck, Wolfgang. Counselor in the political department of the German foreign ministry; assigned to the German Armistice Commission at Wiesbaden.

⁷⁹D.F.C.A.A., III, 379.

Chapter V. December 1941 - December 1942

By late 1941, the Germans had become quite anxious over the situation in the Mediterranean, because in Libya, Auchinleck¹ was leading the British Eighth Army in a successful campaign against the Axis. Hitler regarded Germany's position as being so precarious that on December 2 he ordered the transfer of German air force units from the Russian front, where they were desperately needed, to southern Italy and North Africa. Field Marshal Kesselring commanded these German units, but he was subordinated to Mussolini and the Italian supreme command. Kesselring was ordered to insure the Axis air and sea supremacy between southern Italy and North Africa. This supremacy was to safeguard the lines of communication with the Axis forces in Africa.²

This German anxiety was compounded by its failure to enlist French aid in North Africa. The failure occurred in a series of tripartite meetings held between the German and Italian Armistice Commissions and a French delegation. The Germans attempted, in these meetings, to reach specific military agreements by which France was to provide the Axis in North Africa with increased aid and support. During the conversations, the Armistice Commission totally ignored all other problems and questions of the armistice and German occupation.

¹Auchinleck, Sir Claude, 1884- . . . British general; commander-in-chief, India (December 1940-July 1941 and June 1943); appointed commander-in chief, Middle East (July, 1941); replaced by Alexander (August, 1942).

²Hitler's directive no. 38. D.G.F.P., D, XIII, 938-39.

On December 3, these military conversations were over-shadowed by a meeting at Saint Florentin-Vergigny between Pétain and Goering in which Goering expressed an unwillingness to grant the French any concessions unless the military provisions of the Paris protocol were fulfilled. Pétain responded by presenting a long list of demands which were almost identical to the supplementary article of the Paris protocol. After introducing these demands, Pétain chided Goering for the current German policy and warned that France would never accept a German Diktat. Goering, thoroughly irritated by the marshal's patronizing behavior, responded "but say, . . . who are the victors, you or we?" He further stated, "you are asking us for very great concessions, but in return, you are offering absolutely nothing."³

The inconclusive results of this meeting, combined with the mediocre activity of the tripartite conversations, compelled the Germans to make one last effort to secure military cooperation with the French. The Armistice Commission informed the Vichy government that Goering was willing to meet with General Juin, commander-in-chief of the French North African army. The French were instructed to draw up plans for the future defense of their empire.⁴ The instructions were indicative that Germany regarded its awkward position in Africa as dangerous enough to warrant further discussions beyond the Armistice Commission, but the Germans made it explicit that any future discussion was to deal only with military matters.

³Extract from procès verbal. D.G.F.P., D, XIII, 914-26 passim.

⁴Ibid., D, XIII, 1000-01.

From this point to December 23, when Goering and Juin met, a series of developments occurred which appreciably affected both general German-French relations and the future of the Armistice Commission. The tripartite negotiations, in progress since November 27, came to a standstill. The Armistice Commission's goal was to see that the terms of the Paris protocol were fulfilled. This was a condition the French were only willing to agree to if the supplementary article was fulfilled first, and throughout the conversations the French treated the German proposals in a dilatory manner. On December 21, the French delegation drew up a memorandum which stated that the negotiations had passed from a technical and military level to a general political plane. Furthermore, even if the parties settled on a workable military agreement, it had to contain a clear political settlement. The French insisted that although France was willing to collaborate with the Reich it was never to allow itself to become totally submissive to the desires of the German government.

The German negotiator, Colonel Boehme,⁵ angrily retorted that the French attitude was not conducive to further negotiations. Admiral Michelier,⁶ the French negotiator, responded that any future conversations had to be based on the above French note.⁷

Boehme immediately transmitted the French note to the OKW, which instructed him to break off all negotiations. Furthermore, the Armistice

⁵Boehme, lieutenant-colonel. German army officer; headquarters liaison of the Armistice Commission (1940-42).

⁶Michelier, Admiral Fritz. Commander French naval forces in Morocco (1940-42 ff.); president of French delegation (July-October, 1941).

⁷D.F.C.A.A., V, 398-401 passim.

Commission was ordered to halt all discussions at Wiesbaden with the French government.⁸

At first glance, the suspension of the Armistice Commission's meetings with the French appeared to represent a sharp break in German-French relations, while in actual fact, the action resulted from a situation that had existed for some time. Ever since the summer of 1941, when it became evident that the Paris protocol was not going to be fulfilled by the French, there was a steady deterioration in relations of the two states. By the autumn of 1941, the commission's influence in France had become minor as Germany's principal apprehension with France began to center on developments in North Africa. As already mentioned, Germany was unable to extract from the French what it wanted in Africa through the Armistice Commission. Therefore, on December 23, one last attempt to acquire active French military collaboration was made in a meeting between Goering and Juin.

At the meeting, Goering immediately expressed his concern about the French defenses in Africa, but if France wanted the necessary means of defense it had to comply with certain German demands. After extensive negotiations, Goering received Juin's agreement on two specific points. The French were to allow the Germans to supply the Afrika Korps, secretly, through Bizerte⁹ and the French also agreed, in principal, to fight with Rommel's forces if he had to retreat into Tunisia.¹⁰

⁸Ibid., V, 401.

⁹Bizerte is a Tunisian port. It has numerous port facilities and is located close to the Italian mainland. It was of particular importance to the Axis for by using this port they facilitated the re-supplying of their forces in Africa.

¹⁰Procès verbal of Juin mission. D.F.C.A.A., V, 381-85 passim.

One other event occurred in December which had a direct influence on future German-French relations. The United States entered the war against the Axis. It accelerated the situation which had been created by the German invasion of Russia, for Germany stepped up its policy of extracting as much as possible from France for its war effort. After December 23, the commission's role in this policy was regulated to a very modest position, and most of its functions were taken over by Abetz, the German ambassador in France.

On January 5, Abetz was recalled to Berlin to receive new instructions from the Fuehrer. He assumed the role previously held by the Armistice Commission in attempting to establish a broad collaboration with the French. Hitler admitted that a radical change in the war situation had occurred, and Germany now needed French assistance more than ever before. He told Abetz that in the near future twenty-five army divisions were to be withdrawn from France for duty in the east.¹¹ This was to create a vacuum which the French were hopefully to be able to fill themselves. The same situation applied to the French empire where Abetz was to grant the French North African army the appropriate releases to assist the German war effort in the Mediterranean.¹²

Abetz, on his return to France, attempted to achieve this broad collaboration with France. His efforts were a complete failure, for the French were unwilling to go beyond what had already been established by the Juin mission. This French attitude produced an added strain on

¹¹In January of 1941 there were 820,000 German troops in France. By March of that year the number had been reduced to 685,000.

¹²Abetz, Pétain et l'Allemagne, 137-38.

German-French relations. Hitler soon came to believe "that France was in no way ready to help us create the new order in Europe." Because of the French attitude, all future requests for concessions in their empire were to be turned down.¹³

At the beginning of 1942, Rommel was able to stall the British offensive in Libya. On January 21, he assumed the initiative and counterattacked, by the end of February he had pushed the British back to Tobruk, and on May 26, he again resumed the offensive and quickly captured Tobruk. Nevertheless, by the summer of 1942, Rommel's Afrika Korps was subjected to forces which it was not able to withstand. British industry and the expanding assistance of the United States meant that the Allies could in the near future subject the Axis in North Africa to massive pressure.

The German apprehension over their inability to compete with the Allies in the industrial field provided the stimulus for the resumption of Armistice Commission meetings on July 14, 1942. Germany's principal interest in the commission now was to acquire gunpowder manufactured in the French free zone.

Even with such an inherent weakness as its inability to maintain an industrial productivity comparable to the Allies, Germany's overall strategic position in the autumn of 1942 appeared to have reached the pinnacle of success. All of continental western Europe with the exception of the Iberian peninsula and the French free zone was under Axis control. The German army was on the outskirts of Leningrad, and on the banks of the Don and Volga. The whole of the Balkan peninsula was under

¹³Goebbels, Goebbels Diaries, 36-37.

Axis control, and finally, Rommel was threatening to push the British out of the Nile valley.

I

The Armistice Commission completely ignored all questions concerning the French navy through December, 1941. After the suspension of the commission's meetings, matters affecting the French navy were cared for by the German "marine" high commission which had been previously a component part of the Armistice Commission. It deliberated on such naval topics as naval war industries, the disposition of French naval forces, and negotiations over neutral marine tonnage. It resided in Paris, and dealt directly with the French government.

To July, 1942, the high commission's primary interest was to acquire neutral tonnage which was interned in French ports. On January 7, it began conversations with the French government on the subject, but the Germans had only marginal success in these negotiations for the French were willing to release only a small number of the neutral ships. Soon after, the Special Economic delegation assumed the role of negotiator on neutral tonnage.

Other than in the above instance, the Armistice Commission took little interest in the French navy through 1942. Such problems as the supplying of the French fleet were handled by other German agencies, especially the Special Economic delegation. After the Allies landed in North Africa on November 7, the commission again began to take an interest in the French fleet but only in respect to the German occupation of the French free zone.

II

Through 1942, the Armistice Commission took little interest in the French air force.

In metropolitan France, the size of the French air force was kept at a bare minimum. The Armistice Commission which initiated this program followed a general German policy of stripping the French metropolitan armed forces to what was considered necessary for defensive purposes only. The Germans began to adhere to this policy more and more as it became evident that France was never going to collaborate with Germany on a military scale. The French attitude led Hitler to state that "we must be careful not to give arms to the peoples of the countries we have conquered."¹⁴

In the French empire, Germany followed a more lenient policy toward the French air force. On February 7, the commission allowed France to create a number of anti-aircraft batteries to be used by the French North African army. At this time, it also allowed a group of fighter planes to be transferred to Tunisia. Finally, it liberated from metropolitan France stock-piles 71,000 rounds of 75mm ammunition for immediate transfer to North Africa.¹⁵ From this point on, nothing of consequence was discussed by the commission on the French colonial air force. Some conversations were continued, but they were conducted outside the commission. On September 22, Nida, the German general consul to Vichy, in a meeting with Laval granted the French the right to form

¹⁴Hitler, Hitler's Secret Conversations, 353.

¹⁵D.F.C.A.A., V, 406.

two fighter groups for use in the French empire.¹⁶ This agreement was of particular significance for it occurred at a time when the regular meetings of the commission were again functioning. Furthermore, the decision was made by a German civil agency on a subject that was previously the sole prerogative of the Armistice Commission.

III

As with the other French metropolitan armed services, the Armistice Commission took little interest in the French metropolitan army through 1942. It followed a policy of limiting this force to the minimum considered adequate by the OKW to preserve internal tranquility in the French free zone.

Up to July, 1942, the Armistice Commission made repeated demands that France assist the Afrika Korps, basing these demands on the Paris protocol. The Vichy regime continued to make limited concessions to the Germans while eluding full compliance by demanding that Germany agree to fulfill the supplementary article of the Paris protocol.

Through the latter part of June, the Vichy government made a series of requests to the commission for extensive reinforcements in North Africa. It asked that the commission release 60,000 French troops for duty there to counteract the existing deficiencies in the French North African army. The commission responded that it was willing to grant such a concession only if France provided Germany with large amounts of war materiel from the free zone. At this time, the commission also

¹⁶D.F.C.A.A., V, 420. Laval had re-entered the Vichy government on April 18, 1942, as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

indicated its desire to sign a common agreement with France for the release of gun powder to Germany.¹⁷

After the re-opening of negotiations at Wiesbaden, the commission took little interest in the French North African army. The French made some feeble attempts to receive further concessions, but their activity was overshadowed by economic questions and then the Allied landings in North Africa.

By the autumn of 1941, the German control commissions were established throughout the French empire. The commissions closely supervised all French troop reinforcements arriving in North Africa. Generally, they met the French transport ships as they entered the harbor of Casablanca through which most French reinforcements had to pass. The French troops and their equipment were then closely inspected by the control commission.¹⁸

IV

Through 1942, Germany pursued a policy of extracting from France as much raw material and finished products as possible. In occupied France, the German activity was similar to the plundering of the occupied zone in 1940 but the Armistice Commission did not take part in this activity.

In the unoccupied zone, Germany also attempted to gather as much material as possible, but it did so by trying to establish economic

¹⁷D.F.C.A.A., V, 412.

¹⁸U. S. Foreign Relations, II, 338-39.

collaboration with the Vichy regime.¹⁹ Through 1942, the Armistice Commission deliberated only on two specific economic questions affecting the unoccupied zone. They were neutral tonnage and the manufacturing of gun powder.

In the tripartite negotiations of December, 1941, the German negotiator, Boehme, first brought up the subject of neutral tonnage. He wanted an agreement in which France was to relinquish to Germany and Italy certain merchant ships which had been interned in French ports. A tentative contract was concluded in which France agreed to relinquish a tonnage of 44,000 tons to Germany, but before the program was expanded the negotiations were disrupted. Therefore Germany had achieved only a small part of what it wanted and consequently was eager to continue the negotiations over neutral tonnage. On January 7, conversations on the subject were continued by the German "merchant marine" high commission, a segment of the Armistice Commission, and its principal interest was to obtain ships of Greek registry. The French government refused to release any of these ships to the Axis, and this refusal ended all discussion on the subject of the transfer of neutral tonnage.²⁰

At the beginning of May 1942, the Germans expressed a strong desire to acquire gun powder from France. Southern France was well situated for the manufacturing of explosives for the raw materials needed for the process were either located in the area or could be easily transferred from the French empire.

¹⁹Abetz, Pétain et les allemandes, 144.

²⁰D.F.C.A.A., V, 403.

The French government, on May 11, signed a general contract with the Armistice Commission in which France was to fabricate gun powder in the free zone for German consumption. In July, the French government attempted to terminate the terms of that contract, but the Armistice Commission maintained that the quantity of gun powder fabricated for Germany was in no way to be reduced. On August 5, a further agreement was signed which was primarily a refinement of the May 11 contract. It contained a German guarantee to provide for the necessary "security" for the French gun powder industries. In return the French assured the Germans of the maximum production of gun powder.²¹

Through 1942, the principal German economic interest in the French empire centered on the supplying of the German military forces in North Africa. To this end, in February the Armistice Commission forced the French to release adequate transports to ship 200 tons of supplies per week to the Afrika Korps and 500 Italian trucks to Tunis.²²

The commission also pressured France into releasing certain stocks of fuel to the Axis in Libya, and by February, the fuel stocks released to the Axis totaled 1,700 tons of aviation gasoline and 1,600 tons of automotive gasoline. The aviation gasoline was taken from French military stocks in Algeria, and most of the automotive gasoline came directly from France.²³

The Armistice Commission also provided for the inspection of

²¹Ibid., V, 414-16.

²²Leahy to U.S. Secretary of State, February 9. Foreign Relations of U.S., 1942, II, 128-29.

²³Ibid., 1942, II, 134.

French North African trade through a port control officer at Casablanca, and all French merchant vessels were closely inspected before being allowed to leave these African ports.²⁴

V

Through 1942, the Armistice Commission had very little influence in French political affairs. This condition was most evident in the occupied zone, for here the commission had no influence at all. Furthermore, the French government ceased making protests through the commission on Germany's policies in the occupied zone. This was most obvious on the question of Alsace and Lorraine. By 1942, the German ministry of interior was actively remaking them into German provinces, and the activity was completely ignored by the commission.

There was a sharp increase in terrorist activity and acts of sabotage against the German occupation in 1942. The French resistance greatly perturbed the Germans. In the occupied zone, the German army retained jurisdiction over all attacks against German military personnel, and it used a heavy hand. These repressive tactics were initiated by the military command in France, and the commission did not take part in such activity.

Germany made repeated attempts to exercise influence over French political life. It made demands for the installment and dismissal of political personages in the Vichy government. In April, Abetz, the German ambassador, pressured the Vichy government to reinstate Laval to his former position. Abetz was the principal avenue of approach for the

²⁴Ibid., 1942, II, 339.

Germans in the free zone, and the Armistice Commission took very little interest in such activity.

VI

In the first of November, 1942, a strong Allied maritime force swept through the Gibraltar Straits and headed in the general direction of Sardinia. On November 6, Colonel Goerhardt, of the Armistice Commission, warned the French delegation that according to his informants this "British" force was entering the Mediterranean with the intention of disembarking on the French coast.

By November 8, the Germans concluded that the anticipated attack was to come along the Tunisian coast. The commission demanded to know what measures the French were taking in the likelihood the Allied invasion fell in this area. The French delegation gave no response.

The Allies first landed at Algiers and then Oran. The French North African army was determined to fight according to the guide line that they were to resist the aggression of anyone. But they were uncertain of Vichy's wishes, and more importantly, they did not have the means to put up an effective resistance for they were inadequately armed and greatly outnumbered. Therefore, their resistance was short lived.

The commission presented an ultimatum to the French delegation on November 9 that German air force units were to be given the complete use of the French airbases in Tunisia. The French consented to the German demand,²⁵ and in the next two days over 100 Axis planes landed

²⁵D.F.C.A.A., V, 444.

on the airfield of El Aouina, Tunisia.²⁶ The German troops with the planes were kept on the field for a short time by French army units. But the local French commander, General Barre, received orders on November 13 to pull his troops twenty miles into the interior of Tunisia. The Germans then assumed full control of the airfield.²⁷

On November 11, the Germans were informed that the French North African army had signed a local armistice with the Allies. The Armistice Commission made it known that German-French relations had reached a critical point. The same day, the German Wehrmacht crossed the demarcation line and began to occupy southern France. No prior indication of this action was given to the French delegation at Wiesbaden.

Admiral Raeder and other German naval leaders were opposed to operation "Attila", because they felt the action could not be effectively carried out and the French fleet captured intact, for the French were obviously preparing their own "Scapa Flow." Because of the German navy's opposition, operation "Attila" was carried out almost entirely by the German army. The German navy did not take part in the initial stages of "Attila," and as a result the German occupying force was without the aid of navy specialists who might have been able to reduce the extent of damage that the French did perform when they scuttled their fleet at Toulon.²⁸

Hitler sent a letter to Pétain explaining why he had ordered the total occupation of France on November 11. He said that Germany must

²⁶Auphan, French Navy, 269.

²⁷France During the Occupation, I, 718

²⁸Auphan, French Navy, 260.

occupy the coastal areas of southern France to protect Germany's position from invasion. He promised Pétain the German occupation was not, in any way, to interfere with the French administration. Furthermore, the judicial status of the armistice was in no way affected by the occupation.²⁹

The Armistice Commission, from November 11 to 13, was preoccupied with the German occupation of southern France. The German occupation suddenly eliminated several sections of the commission. Its Ruestung and political affairs sections continued to function, while all questions of employing French troops were treated directly through the German and French army commanders.³⁰

On November 16, Boehme, the temporary commission chairman, discussed with the western Wehrmacht commander the future lines of authority in France between the commission and the German army. At the time, the OKW was still trying to establish a collaboration with the French. Therefore, the Armistice Commission continued to function within the modifications imposed by the German occupation of France.

The last vestige of French sovereignty disappeared when the Germans occupied the French naval base at Toulon, on November 27, in an unsuccessful bid to capture the French fleet anchored there.³¹ The

²⁹Hitler's letter to Petain, November 11. Dommages subis en le France, I, 336-37 passim.

³⁰D.F.C.A.A., V, 425.

³¹Almost eighty ships were at Toulon and represented the better half of the French fleet. The fleet was organized into three groups. The high seas fleet, commanded by Admiral de Labords, consisted of 1 battleship, 3 heavy cruisers, 2 light cruisers, and 13 destroyers. Next there was the Toulon Naval District, commanded by Admiral Marquis, and it had 1 battleship, 2 destroyers, and 10 submarines. The last group consisted of those ships which had been decommissioned by the

French were warned beforehand of the German action and therefore successfully scuttled the largest portion of the fleet. Sixty-one ships totaling 225,000 tons were sunk or damaged beyond repair.³²

The Germans then turned their attention to the French empire. On December 8, General Gause, the German commander at Bizerte, presented the local French commander with an ultimatum. He demanded that the French immediately surrender all ships, fortifications, and other military installations. The French commander complied and relinquished a few light vessels and nine old submarines.³³

Colonel Bassonpierre, of the Armistice Commission, on December 2, announced that the commission and the French delegation were to be dissolved. All military questions were to be handled by an organization created for just such a purpose. This organization, the Arbeitsstab, was under the command of General Caldairou.

On December 5, Germany demanded that all French military services be disbanded, and the same day the Vichy government began to comply with the German demand. Field Marshall Rundstedt,³⁴ the German army commander in the west, supervised the disbanding of the French armed forces, but he shared this responsibility with the German navy and air force western commanders. The Arbeitsstab was now placed under the authority of

armistice. The Germans attacked Toulon in two columns. One column made its way directly to the quay and the ships at anchor. The other column situated itself so as to control the mouth of the harbor.

³²Belot, Struggle for the Mediterranean, 193.

³³Auphan, French Navy, 268.

³⁴Rundstedt, Karl Rudolf, 1875-1953. German field marshal; commander-in-chief, West (1942-45).

Rundstedt, and it functioned as an advisory board to him.

Abetz and the German military commander in France assumed the duties of the Armistice Commission's "political affairs" section. The military commander's competence was restricted to Alsace and Lorraine, to North France, and to the Pas-de-Calais. The commission's armament section came under the authority of the Ruestung.³⁵

On December 22, Germany attempted to reinstate the offices of the Armistice Commission, and it was to continue to "function like in the past."³⁶ But this was impossible to accomplish for the commission's functions had ceased to be of any importance. Its primary function had been to govern and administer the armistice, and with the German occupation of southern France that armistice ceased to exist.

³⁵D.F.C.A.A., V, 426-27.

³⁶Ibid.

Chapter VI. Conclusion

In June 1940, the French government appealed to Germany for a cessation of hostilities. Germany quickly accepted, for France was not yet defeated; the Wehrmacht had only defeated the French army. The French navy, one of the most powerful in the world in 1940, was still intact and the French empire was also outside the grasp of Germany. If the war against France was continued, the remaining French military forces were sure to continue the war under British direction. Furthermore, German leaders were optimistic that Britain was soon to be defeated and the war ended. If this were to be the case, there was no reason for Germany to conclude either a final peace treaty or a detailed armistice with France, for France's future would be decided in the anticipated general peace treaty.

The German-French armistice was written in general terms and was moderate in tone. It did not mention the French empire. This was a serious omission and one the Germans repeatedly attempted to rectify. The German failure to implement a workable agreement on the French empire caused a gradual deterioration in German-French relations that was quite pronounced by the end of 1941.

From 1940 to 1942, Germany extracted from France as much as possible to facilitate its war effort. The Armistice Commission was one of a number of German agencies which participated in this program. The resources of the occupied zone were directly harnessed to the German war effort, while in the free zone Germany followed a more moderate policy, attempting to enlist the active collaboration of Vichy France.

In the French empire, Germany often granted concessions to the French so that the Vichy regime could maintain control of its possessions and thus assist the Axis position in the Mediterranean.

By the German-French armistice, an Armistice Commission was created, and it was, originally, to govern all aspects of the armistice. This role was soon modified, and by July, 1940, occupied France was placed under the authority of a German military commander. Soon after, the Special Economic delegation was created and it governed most economic matters between Germany and France. By August, the commission's authority was further undermined by the establishment of the German embassy in Paris which assumed all responsibility for political interaction between Berlin and Vichy.

From July to December, 1940, the Armistice Commission made a number of concessions to the French navy. Through 1941 and 1942, the commission generally refused to grant any further concessions to the French navy, for the Germans felt that the concessions already granted were adequate enough for the defense of the French empire. Throughout the period, Germany kept the largest portion of the French fleet at Toulon. In this way, if Germany overran the free zone the French fleet could not escape, and this was exactly what happened on November 27, 1942.

The Armistice Commission treated the French air force in much the same manner as the French navy. In the free zone, the commission limited the size of the French air force to what it considered adequate to provide for the defense of the area. From 1940 to 1942, the commission retained strict control over the French metropolitan air force. In the

French empire, the commission allowed the French air force a certain amount of freedom, for it appeared much more willing to grant concessions here than in metropolitan France.

The French metropolitan army was limited to 100,000 men, and its main function was to guarantee the domestic tranquility of the free zone. The Armistice Commission actively interfered in the construction and activity of the French army through the control commissions it sent into the free zone.

The Armistice Commission did not send control commissions into the French empire until quite late in 1940. It did so only as a result of Italian inability to provide the necessary supervision and control over the French North African army.

The Armistice Commission granted a variety of concessions to the French North African army. The Germans hoped that in this way the French would be able to defend their own possessions, and thus secure one flank of the Axis position in Africa. This policy, up to November 1942, was generally a success.

Germany's overall economic policy toward France was to extract from it as much as possible for the German war effort, and this policy assumed various degrees of intensity. In the occupied zone, Germany followed a policy of directly harnessing the French economy to the German war economy, and by 1942, Germany had moved large quantities of raw material and finished products to Germany. The Armistice Commission had a very minor role in this policy for the program was primarily handled by the military commander in France, the Ruestung, and the Sepcial Economic delegation.

In unoccupied France, the commission originally directed all German economic interests. By August 1940, its powers were limited to only considering the French war industries, which it regulated only in an indirect manner. It gathered material from the free zone but only through normal channels of commercial exchange. In the economic agreements concluded by the commission with the Vichy regime, the former continually attempted to achieve an active collaboration with the French, and these attempts usually met with failure.

In French political affairs, the Armistice Commission had very little influence. By August 1940, most political questions were handled either by Abetz, the German ambassador, or the German military commander in the occupied zone. Whenever the commission did deliberate on a political question any action was always and only in response to French protests.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

French Navy - 1939¹

Type	In Commission	Under Construction	Total
Battleships	7	2	9
Aircraft Carriers	2	1	3
Cruisers	19		19
Destroyers	71	8	79
Submarines	76	10	86

¹Auphan, French Navy, 389.

APPENDIX B

List of Members of German Armistice Commission (June 29, 1940)¹

President	General Stuelpnagel
Headquarters Liaison	Colonel Boehme
1. Army Group	Lieutenant-General Mieth
a. Section operations	Colonel Winter
b. Quarter-master general	Commandant Kossmann
c. Chief of transport	Lieutenant-Colonel Theilacker
d. Transmissions	Lieutenant-Colonel Negendanck
2. Navy Group	Captain de Vaisseau Wever
3. Air Force Group	Lieutenant-General Foerster
4. Economic and Armament	Colonel Huenermann
5. Prisoners of War	Commandant Mielecki
6. Representatives of Foreign Ministry	
a. Counsellor of Legation	Hencke
b. Secretary of Legation	Tafel
7. Representative of Four Year Plan .	Steffen
8. Bureau of liaison Hôtel Rose . . .	Count Spee

¹D.F.C.A.A., I, 1.

APPENDIX C

Dates of entry of the presidents of the German Armistice Commission and of the French delegation:¹

A. Presidents (chairmen) of the German Armistice Commission

1. General Stuelpnagel: June 29, 1940.
2. General Vogl: February 15, 1941. He was again president of the commission on September 8, 1944.

B. Presidents of the French delegation

1. General Huntziger: June 27, 1940.
2. General Doyen: September 13, 1940.
3. Vice-admiral Michelier: (par intérim) July 19, 1941.
4. General Beynet: October 1, 1941.
5. General Bérard: February 3, 1943; he left Wiesbaden July 28, 1944.
6. General Vignol: (par intérim) July 29 to September 9, 1944, the date of the internment of all personnel of the French delegation.

¹D.F.C.A.A., V, 425.

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